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2007 PREVIEW

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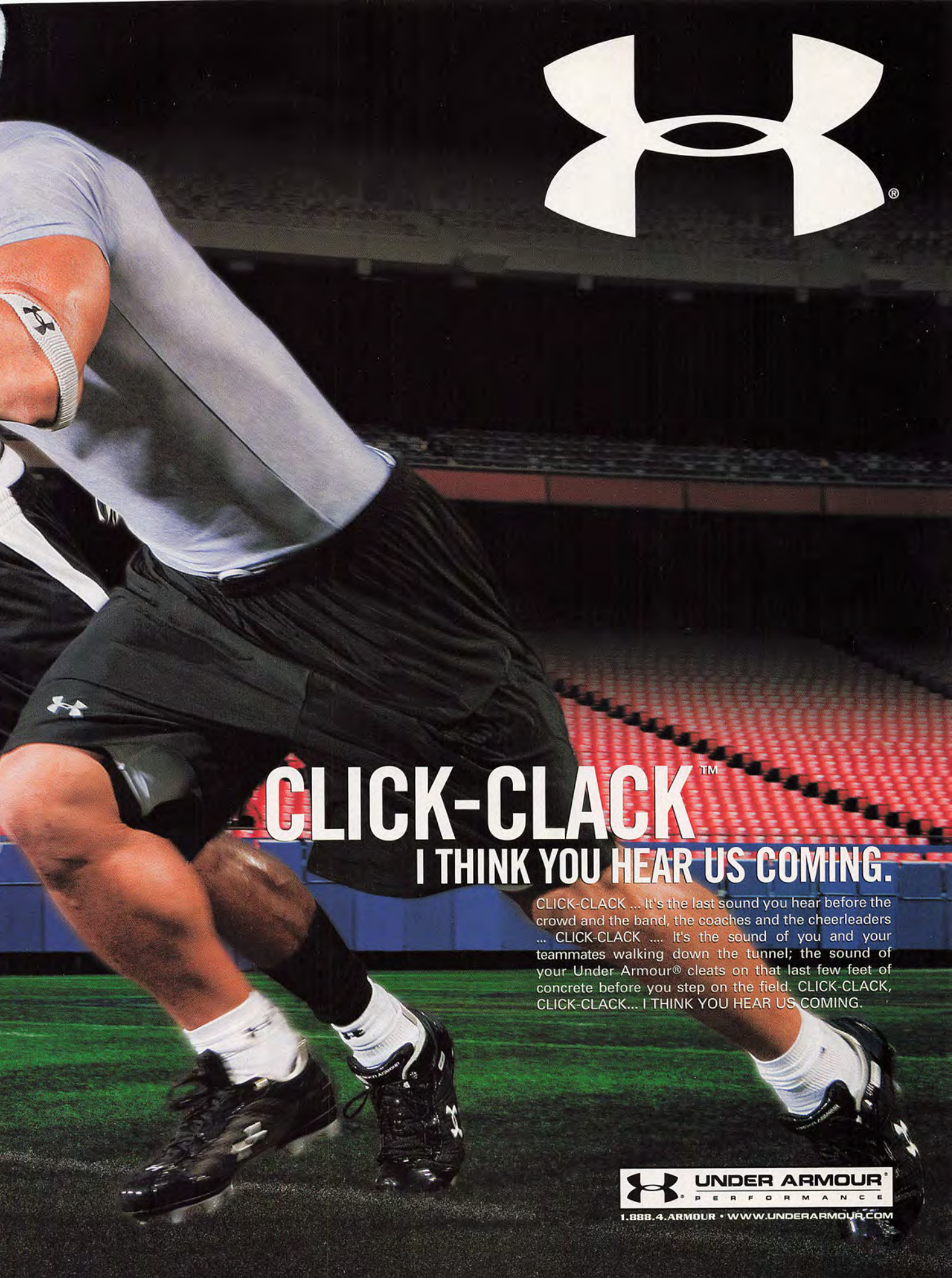
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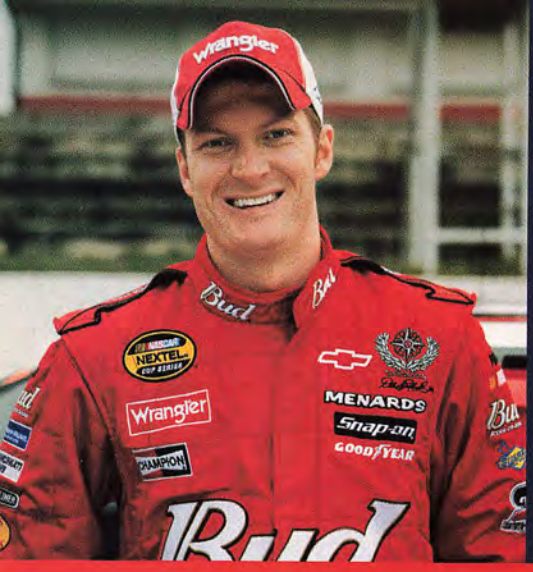

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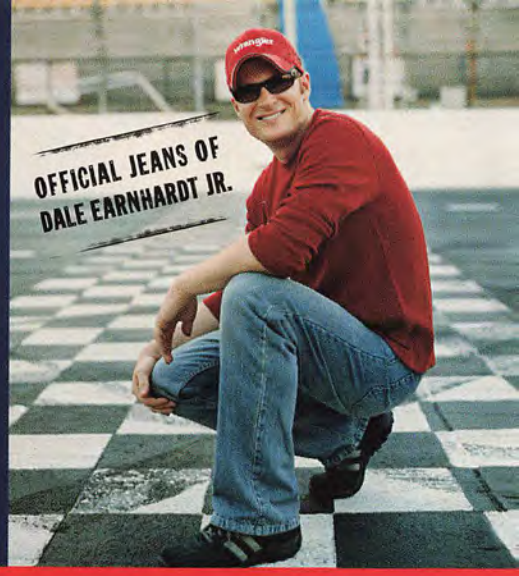
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Letter from the Publisher

Welcome to the 2007 issues of *Lindy's* college football. This marks our 26th year of publishing a college football magazine.

You will definitely want to check out our national picks beginning on page 8. Why? Because the *Wall Street Journal* did an in-depth study and story of all the pickers over the last five years. *Lindy's* — as you might have guessed by now — was #1.

The biggest story in college football this season is Nick Saban's return to college coaching at Alabama. Beginning on page 18, *Lindy's* chronicles the very tumultuous 25 years at Bama since the legendary Paul "Bear" Bryant retired in 1982 (*Lindy's* first year).

Lindy's continues to improve its Web site. Be sure to check out the additional player ratings at **www.lindyssports.com.**

My oldest brother Mike passed away suddenly this past November. My father passed away in 2003. I would like to dedicate these issues to them. My father believed in me when only a dad could and my brother passed his passion for college football down to his little brother.

Have a great season! As always your comments and suggestions are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lindy Davis Jr.

Lindy Davis
Publisher

P.S. On page 59, you will see how you can participate in a readership survey. Your help would be greatly appreciated and you could win some Sugar Bowl tickets.

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NATIONAL PICKS

King of L.A. has it on autopilot ... to another national title

PHOTO BY JOHN PYLE

1. USC

Unless you're a Trojan, you probably hope some NFL team dangles a monstrous enough carrot (Brinks truck full of cash, team ownership, full control ... whatever) that finally lures away the King of L.A.

Because if Pete Carroll stays at Southern California for much longer, the annual race to the BCS championship game is going to become a yearly chase "to see who gets to play SC."

He has the best gig going in college football, with five consecutive Pac-10 titles, three Heismans, two national titles (and one shoestring tackle of Vince Young from a third).

In what amounted to a rebuilding year, USC last season won 11 games, humbled Michigan in the Rose Bowl, and probably was a tipped pass away from yet another national title shot.

This is not a rebuilding year for the Trojans. This is a year in which they are the only reasonable choice for No. 1.

THE GOOD NEWS: The defense is fast enough to inflict whiplash and windburn. The linebackers are a Top 5 group nationally — and we're just talking about USC's second team. The starting defense has about seven potential All-Americans, including all three linebackers and defensive tackle Sedrick Ellis.

The offense has enough *Parade* All-American running backs to ... well, hold a parade. When USC hits the field for fall practice, seven (!) ex-*Parade* All-Americans will line up to take carries. Say this about these guys: they're not afraid of competition.

THE BAD NEWS: Everybody is gunning for the Trojans, and there is plenty of potential payback out there in games at Nebraska and Cal, and, we suppose, at a rebuilding Notre Dame. QB John David Booty can't have key late-game passes batted down anymore. He will be working with two new starting receivers.

UCLA was emboldened by last season's victory against USC and will be waiting to trip up the Trojans once again.

OUR CALL: That Rose Bowl win over the Wolverines, combined with 10 returning starters on defense and an embarrassing abundance of talent of offense, makes it perfectly clear: This USC edition is the real deal.

2. LSU

Who needs a QB? Bengals have everything else

What we usually like to see in a national title contender is a great defensive line (Glenn Dorsey, Tyson Jackson, check, check) and a talented, experienced quarterback. OK, then ... we'll make an exception. The Tigers' QB situation has to be taken with a bit of faith, although LSU has the moving parts to make it work — either steady senior Matt Flynn or sophomore Ryan Perilloux, who is a mighty fine, mighty fast moving part.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Tigers have their pick of running backs and playmakers at receiver, such as Early Doucet and Brandon LaFell. Whoever gets past the defensive line will be wiped out by head-hunting linebackers. No drop-off is expected from a defense that ranked third in the nation.

THE BAD NEWS: The optimism can be tempered, albeit not countered, with the loss of three very important people — quarterback JaMarcus Russell, free safety LaRon Landry and offensive coordinator Jimbo Fisher. Nick Saban is waiting to wreck things on Nov. 3 when LSU goes to Alabama.

OUR CALL: The SEC, while deep as usual, has a more manageable field of elite teams this year, and LSU's league schedule is favorable. All roads lead right back "home" — in New Orleans for the BCS championship game.

3. MICHIGAN

Stars are back, will title follow?

A year after Ohio State dominated the Big Ten, it's Michigan's conference to lose this time. Don't expect Lloyd Carr to blow it. Despite his critics, only a handful of his peers are more consistent. Even fewer have the offensive firepower Michigan possesses this season. Still, you wonder if this won't be like last season with an SEC team edging out the Wolverines for the second spot in the BCS title game.

THE GOOD NEWS: Offensive tackle Jake Long, quarterback Chad Henne and running back Mike Hart all decided to return instead of chasing mega-bucks in the NFL. That means Carr will be able to pound opponents into submission, at least with his offense.

THE BAD NEWS: One of the (seemingly) all-time Michigan defenses went bust against Ohio State and USC. Carr must replace four All-Big Ten performers — Alan Branch, Leon Hall, David Harris and LaMarr Woodley. A trip to Wisconsin looms large. As always, Ohio State looms larger.

OUR CALL: Was it foreshadowing that the previously great defense gave up a combined 74 points in the last two games? We say yes. The Wolverines will win a watered down Big Ten, but will get tripped up somewhere.

4. WEST VIRGINIA

More than just a trendy pick nowadays

Nobody doubts West Virginia anymore. The BCS is not a strange and distant land for the Mountaineers. And how's this for acting like one of the big boys: Rich Rodriguez turned down Ala-freakin'-Bama to stay in Morgantown. Of course he did. He has a better team. With seven returning starters on both sides of the line, West Virginia is aiming for its third consecutive 11-win season ... or better.

THE GOOD NEWS: If QB Pat White, last season's Big East Offensive Player of the Year, doesn't make a strong run at the Heisman, RB Steve Slaton could. The offense will be a disappointment if it doesn't average 40 points a game. The biggest one is at home — Louisville on Nov. 8.

THE BAD NEWS: Something went awry with the 3-3-5 defense in the second half of the season, as the Mountaineers allowed 32 points per game. The secondary and the pass rush must improve. White and Slaton take a lot of hits; an injury to either would be devastating.

OUR CALL: It's no longer trendy, or gutsy, or laughable, to pick West Virginia as a prime contender for the national title. With White and Slaton both juniors, this is another go-for-it season.

5. TEXAS

Gotta do it week in, week out

The Horns have won at least 10 games in six consecutive seasons. They're loaded again and are the perfectly logical, perfectly reasonable choice to win the Big 12. It's just a matter of Texas showing up week after week. Last year's losses to Kansas State and Texas A&M cost the Longhorns the conference title. Hmmm ... What did we say about showing up every week? Five of the last seven this season are away from home, so the traps are set.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Colt McCoy looks like a top Heisman contender with a bigger body and more experience. Midway through last season, he arguably was the best player in the country. The offense will fly with McCoy, WR Limas Sweed, RB Jamaal Charles, etc.

THE BAD NEWS: The secondary was one of the bigger conundrums of the season. Aaron Ross won the Thorpe Award. Michael Griffin and Tarell Brown were considered NFL talents. Yet, this unit finished near the bottom in pass defense and was frequently toast. How will it be stronger?

OUR CALL: The Horns reload and should be hungry. An Alamo Bowl appearance just won't cut it most years. Texas has the goods to reach late November with all the big prizes still in play.

6. WISCONSIN

No easy road this time, but they don't need it

The Badgers' argument that their 12-1 season should have earned them a BCS bowl last season fails to mention that they didn't beat Michigan when they had the chance, and they didn't beat many other teams of consequence. The Badgers beat two teams with winning records during the regular season. No more excuses — and no more free passes, as the '06 schedule of cream puffs morphs into dates at Ohio State and Penn State and a home game against Michigan. Whatever the Badgers get this season, they will earn.

THE GOOD NEWS: Yes, Bret Bielema *is* that good ... Yes, it doesn't matter that neither you nor Bielema knows who the starting quarterback will be (that rarely matters in Madison) ... Yes, P.J. Hill will carry the load and become the next great Badgers tailback.

THE BAD NEWS: The left tackle won't be able to carry the offense again. Outland Trophy winner Joe Thomas is gone. Sophomore Jake Bscherer (6-7, 297) and redshirt freshman Gabe Carimi (6-8, 292) will try.

OUR CALL: It's been a *loooong* wait for the Badgers. Eight years, to be exact, since the last Rose Bowl. It'll be a long wait this season, too. The key games — at Ohio State, home vs. Michigan — come in November.

7. TENNESSEE

About time to get back to a BCS game

Tennessee, national champion way back in 1998, hasn't been back to a BCS bowl game since 1999, and hasn't had a Top 10 finish since 2001. Since then LSU and Florida have won national titles. Auburn went undefeated. Georgia has had four final Top 10 rankings. South Carolina hired Steve Spurrier. Alabama has answered with Nick Saban. For those wearing orange, it's about time to feel nationally relevant again.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Erik Ainge is a senior who finally seems to "get it," and he has a new toy to play with this fall — a no-huddle offense. If he doesn't want to pass, a trio of running backs know what to do with the ball. LSU is off the schedule.

THE BAD NEWS: There is inexperience at defensive tackle and in the secondary, and no break-in time for the new starters. An opener at Cal is followed with a home game against C-USA East favorite Southern Miss, which is followed by a trip to The Swamp.

OUR CALL: The early schedule will tell us if Tennessee is ready to rejoin the national elite. But even a stumble or two won't rule out a run to the SEC title game behind a senior quarterback.

8. VIRGINIA TECH

Proud program seeks consistency

It's impossible to reference the Hokies' season without the context of the tragedy on campus in April and how it affects the Blacksburg community. The football team undoubtedly will embrace the opportunity to do what LSU football did in 2005 for its hurricane-ravaged region — provide comfort and good cheer by winning a lot of games. Said coach Frank Beamer: "We're going to be even more proud and it's going to draw us closer together."

THE GOOD NEWS: Defense is the thing, with eight starters back from a unit that allowed 11.0 points and 219.5 yards per game. Three defenders will press for All-American honors — LBs Vince Hall and Xavier Adibi, and CB Brandon Flowers.

THE BAD NEWS: The play of QB Sean Glennon — 11 TDs and 11 interceptions in his first year as a starter — doesn't scream "national championship!" A game at LSU in the second week of the season could end those hopes in a hurry, anyway (or spur them, of course). Consistency has been elusive.

OUR CALL: You might as well shake up the top several teams in the ACC and pull names out of a hat. It's that ridiculously close. Why Tech? The defense and a league road schedule that largely can be handled.

9. LOUISVILLE

Can Kragthorpe keep machine humming?

Three points. That's what kept Louisville out of last season's national championship picture. A three-point loss in November at Rutgers was the difference between a Big East title and a shot at the national title (and Florida is grateful because the Gators would otherwise have been locked out). As it turned out, their first BCS game (and victory) carried the Cardinals through the offseason to another title shot. The biggest impediment this time is a trip to West Virginia.

THE GOOD NEWS: Injury-prone quarterback Brian Brohm not only returned earlier than expected from a thumb injury, but he returned for his senior season. The Cardinals aren't USC-deep at tailback, but they are plenty deep. Harry Douglas is All-American quality at receiver, and Mario Urrutia isn't bad, either.

THE BAD NEWS: Despite a smooth transition from Bobby Petrino to Steve Kragthorpe, there has to be a kernel of doubt in Louisville. It's not bad news, just a question: Can Kragthrope keep this machine humming?

OUR CALL: Louisville will be undefeated when it travels to West Virginia in November. That result will determine its Big East and national title fate.

10. OKLAHOMA

Dark days don't mean it's twilight

For the first time in the Stoops era, Oklahoma is in a dark place. The NCAA poked around after the Big Red Imports scandal. Bob Stoops became uncooperative with the media. There is uncertainty at quarterback. Tricky Boise State made Oklahoma victim of one of the best bowl games ever. Didn't these guys win the Big 12 last year? Let's not feel too bad for them. They return 16 starters from a team that won 10 games.

THE GOOD NEWS: Depth at tailback will make up for the loss of Adrian Peterson. We know this because Allen Patrick and Chris Brown already did it last season, and DeMarco Murray was a spring game flash. The receivers are deep and fab, too, so there's one big question ...

THE BAD NEWS: Who is going to be handing off and passing the ball? No quarterback has stepped forward to replace Paul Thompson. The departure of three defensive ends and two linebackers leaves a playmaking void; they combined for 45.5 tackles for loss last year.

OUR CALL: It's a one-game season again and Texas has won the past two meetings handily. Oklahoma is going to have to close the quarterback gap on the Longhorns to get back into the favorite's role.

11. FLORIDA

Rebuilding toward another big run

Welcome to the first year of the rest of your career, Urban Meyer. He became the third coach this decade to win a national championship in his second year at a school. For an encore? Cut him a bit of slack. The university can't win at everything. The Gators are just too dang young to repeat as national champs this year, but everyone could be chasing them again in 2008.

THE GOOD NEWS: Quarterback Tim Tebow, a Heisman candidate before his first start, already owns the campus. Now it's his offense, too. It will be one of the strongest in the nation with Tebow, WR Percy Harvin, WR Andre Caldwell and ... well, somebody at tailback.

THE BAD NEWS: Like Ohio State's Jim Tressel before last season, Meyer must replace nine starters on defense. Unlike Tressel, Meyer hasn't had years to groom his replacements. Expect some shootouts in The Swamp. Hey, just like the old days!

OUR CALL: There's a lot of revenge waiting out there. Trips to LSU, Kentucky and South Carolina means Gator Nation will be lucky to get a return trip to Atlanta (*aka* SEC East title) in this rebuilding year.

12. CALIFORNIA

Second best in the West ain't bad

Let's see ... should we call him "Tedford the all-knowing Bear" or "Mighty Tedford, master of all knowledge." That's how a Cal grad and daily comic strip writer referred to Jeff Tedford in print last year. Animal characters climb a mountain to find a helmeted bear. "The key to eternal happiness?" one asks. "Avoid costly turnovers," Mighty Tedford answers. Yeah, that, and having DeSean Jackson.

THE GOOD NEWS: Sixteen starters return from a 10-3 team that ran through Texas A&M 45-10 in the Holiday Bowl. Jackson is the best returner in college football, and might be the best receiver, too. QB Nate Longshore has been through the fire and should be steadier.

THE BAD NEWS: Departed stars include the Pac-10 Player of the Year for offense (RB Marshawn Lynch) and defense (CB Daymeion Hughes). The defensive front is the biggest question for a team that could use a more reliable pass rush.

OUR CALL: So, Cal is second best in the Pac-10. That will be easier to take this time if the Bears muster some revenge on Tennessee in the opener and go on to a BCS at-large berth. For that, they better avoid costly turnovers.

13. OHIO STATE

Somehow, they get to play underdog role

The Buckeyes can't rub their eyes and make last season's BCS championship game go away, and no amount of wishing will bring back Heisman-winning quarterback Troy Smith and three other playmakers who left early — WRs Ted Ginn Jr. and Anthony Gonzalez, and RB Antonio Pittman. But, hey, this is Ohio State. The Buckeyes don't sweat the vacancies. They have averaged 11 victories in the past five seasons, come what may.

THE GOOD NEWS: OSU has the potential for a winning formula — pound the ball with 230-pound sophomore Chris Wells and clean up messes on defense with one of the nation's top group of linebackers. LB James Laurinaitis, CB Malcolm Jenkins and DE Vernon Gholston are cornerstones on D.

THE BAD NEWS: It's hard to express greatness when only 10 starting position players return, and there are a mere five scholarship seniors on the entire roster. Todd Boeckman, or whoever takes over at QB, has to get in sync with new starting receivers.

OUR CALL: Don't count 'em out. The schedule sets up for a fast start, and the Buckeyes still have that voodoo hex on Michigan. BCS title game? No. Big Ten title? Ohio State could steal one in a "down" year.

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14. ARKANSAS

Rough offseason toughens 'em up?

Coach Houston Nutt must feel like he was pummeled with sandbags this offseason. Parents complained about their sons' playing time. Star recruits Damian Williams and Mitch Mustain bolted after one year. So, too, did their ex-high school coach and Hogs offensive coordinator Gus Malzahn. Nutt had to answer for cell-phone records released on the Internet. But at the end of the day, he still has the best player in America — Darren McFadden.

THE GOOD NEWS: Who knows when a talent like McFadden will come through Fayetteville again, and Nutt intends to squeeze all the production he can from the junior. RB Felix Jones is the best No. 2 running back in the nation. Southern California (120 points in past two seasons vs. Hogs) is off the schedule.

THE BAD NEWS: Given the offseason turmoil and the retirement of athletic director Frank Broyles, Nutt can't afford to have a season that falls short of expectations. He'll have to navigate the SEC with a defense that lost two early to the NFL and returns only four starters.

OUR CALL: The non-conference schedule is embarrassingly simple, setting up what should be at least a nine-win regular season. With McFadden, something even a little better is possible, although wrestling the West away from LSU might be too tough.

15. TCU

Looking for turn as BCS gate-crasher

While TCU has spent most of the decade knocking loudly, the BCS door was eventually kicked in, first by Utah and then more spectacularly by Boise State. This time, the Horned Frogs could finally be the ones busting up the joint. Gary Patterson's teams have won at least 10 games in four of the past five seasons, and reaching double-digit victories will be the least expectation for what should be the most major of the mid-majors.

THE GOOD NEWS: Nine starters return from one of the nation's stingiest defenses, and DE Tommy Blake will make a run for All-America honors. The Frogs were third in the nation last season, allowing 12.3 points per game. RB Aaron Brown is a versatile weapon in an offense that has plenty of giddy-up.

THE BAD NEWS: The QB position remains in flux, although Marcus Jackson has winning experience as an injury replacement and is the top candidate to replace Jeff Ballard. The path to perfection is blocked by a game at Texas, but if Boise can beat Oklahoma ...

OUR CALL: TCU should smother its MWC opponents, and that will be the key. If the only blemish on the schedule is a loss at Texas ... well, the polls should be forgiving — how about the computers? The Frogs need to finish No. 12 or better for a certain BCS spot.

16. RUTGERS

Get used to seeing Jersey up here

The Scarlet Knights became a program last year — a program that in any given year can compete for the Big East championship (and a BCS game). Thank athletic director Bob Mulcahy, who stayed with his guy when times were bad, and Greg Schiano, who stayed when Miami came calling. If Schiano stays through the terms of his contract ($1.5 million through 2016), those league titles will come ... and, who knows, maybe even a real run at a national title.

THE GOOD NEWS: Former Syracuse recruit Ray Rice is a Heisman favorite after rushing for almost 1,800 yards. The defense — the line and the secondary — can really run and cause all kinds of problems. Kicker Jeremy Ito is a nice player to have in close games.

THE BAD NEWS: Quarterback Mike Teel (13 interceptions, 12 touchdowns) is going to have to get a lot better to lead Rutgers to the next level. Schiano will have to find a blocking back/pass catcher/good-guy leader now that Brian Leonard is off to the NFL.

OUR CALL: Rutgers is part of the Big Three in Big East with Louisville and West Virginia. So, why are the Knights the least of those three? Check the quarterback situation and see for yourself.

17. GEORGIA

Stafford's growth offers possible payoff

When last seen, the Dawgs were beating nationally ranked Auburn, Georgia Tech and Virginia Tech to end the season. To pick up where they left off, sophomore Matthew Stafford is going to have to pick up where he left off. "Once he quit turning the ball over, we began to win again," coach Mark Richt said. Stafford's experience alone should mean that the Bulldogs will do better than their 4-4 SEC record of last season.

THE GOOD NEWS: Georgia has the best secondary in the SEC, led by CB Paul Oliver, and a clutch kicker in Brandon Coutu. The running backs rank behind only Arkansas, with redshirt freshman Knowshon Moreno ready to share some carries with veterans Kregg Lumpkin and Thomas Brown.

THE BAD NEWS: In the manly world of SEC football, having six new starters on the defensive front seven is no way to win the league. Neither is this: The projected starters on the offensive line include a true freshman, a redshirt freshman and a junior college transfer.

OUR CALL: Mark Richt has brought in six consecutive Top 10 recruiting classes, so it's not like he's putting fish food (ahem, Gator bait) out the field, no matter how young. Still, wait for '08.

18. TEXAS A&M

Just about time to finish the roof?

It's about time. Dennis Franchione's entire career arc has been about rebuilding (well, Alabama fans will say it's also about failing to "hold the rope"), and this is his fifth season in College Station without much to show for it. He's just 25-23 as an Aggie, but there are signs. Good signs. Like a win over Texas last season. Like having 15 starters back, nine on offense. Like having strength and speed. Like having a QB, Stephen McGee, who spits nails.

THE GOOD NEWS: The thunder-and-lightning motif might be overdone for tailback combinations, but you can't resist with 274-pound Jorvorskie Lane and Mike Goodson. The O-line is one of the most experienced around. The offense can eat clock with the best of them.

THE BAD NEWS: Look no further than the schedule. This is it. The Aggies play at Miami, and while the 'Canes ain't what they used to be they're still Miami. Big 12 play brings games at Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri.

OUR CALL: Love the team, hate the schedule. Those four Big 12 road games we just mentioned ... A&M is 2-13 at those places since the Big 12 began.

19. HAWAII

Taking a turn at WAC controls

Boise State has won or shared the past five WAC titles, and now comes the team that can pry the Broncos' death grip from the trophy ... and possibly steal their BCS thunder. Hawaii, with its Heisman-caliber quarterback and tough-guy Islanders, not only led the nation in vowels last season, it led in scoring. The Warriors should — will — do so again with a barrage of laser-guided throws from senior Colt Brennan.

THE GOOD NEWS: Brennan is a legit Top-10 NFL talent, and his top trio of receivers are back, too. All they did last season was accumulate 3,168 receiving yards and 36 touchdowns. WAC heavyweights Boise State and Fresno State each travel to Honolulu this season.

THE BAD NEWS: The non-conference schedule isn't as tough as usual (harder to find BCS teams to be victims in Hawaii), which will hurt BCS at-large possibilities. Hawaii loses four All-WAC linemen — two on each side of the ball.

OUR CALL: Hawaii has yet to win an outright WAC championship (it has two co-titles on its resume) and if not now, when? The offense, the schedule and a predicted step back from Boise State add up to championship.

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20. WAKE FOREST

Don't dismiss as a one-year wonder

Many figure the defending ACC champs (man, it still feels weird to say that) won't be BCS timber this time around. We're not so sure. If a big-name program such as Florida State or Miami returned 14 starters and a rising star quarterback, you could bet that they would not be so easily dismissed. With Jim Grobe's redshirt program, the Demon Deacons are still stocked with fourth- and fifth-year players who now know how to win.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Riley Skinner was just a guy recruited by no other Division I-A school — before he took over in last season's opener and earned second-team All-ACC honors. He's a wily sophomore now, and the misdirection offense gets back RB Micah Andrews from injury.

THE BAD NEWS: Wake walked the ledge last season, going 5-0 in games decided by a touchdown or less. Season-opening games — at Boston College and home to Nebraska — will show if Wake Forest has retained the magic ... and if the defense can maintain its stature.

OUR CALL: Will Wake come crashing back to earth after the euphoria of 2006? Maybe, but it should be a good team again — one that deserves that benefit of the doubt based on its ability, not its name.

21. FLORIDA STATE

Staff changes suggest new urgency

It's all about the Bowdens. With a major staff reshuffle, FSU fans still get to love Bobby Bowden, no longer have to boo deposed offensive coordinator Jeff Bowden ... and because of those first two things, might no longer have to fear Tommy Bowden (his Clemson team has won two in a row over daddy). There's a whole new feeling in Tallahassee because of the five new assistants, as Bobby brought back Chuck Amato and stole offensive coordinator Jimbo Fisher from LSU.

THE GOOD NEWS: The talent is there. That hasn't been the question, even as the 'Noles lost 11 games the past two years. Eleven! Or the same number of games FSU lost from 1991 through 1999. Anyway ... expect more toughness and intensity to go with that talent.

THE BAD NEWS: Why has it been so hard lately to find a franchise QB? Drew Weatherford and Xavier Lee haven't been it, but again they will battle for the right to be the starter. The linebacker position took a hit with the loss of Buster Davis and Lawrence Timmons.

OUR CALL: Bobby Bowden probably is giving this coaching thing one more fling with the staff changes. If they work, he can turn back the clock to the 1990s. If they don't, what's next, Bobby?

22. UCLA

Ask Trojans how good these guys can be

The Bruins return 10 starters from a defense that produced this final: UCLA 13, USC 9. No assistant coach in the country did more last season than defensive coordinator DeWayne Walker. It was like he was Mickey in Rocky, transforming a sluggish fighter into one that could eat lightning. UCLA, which had the second-worst run defense in the nation in 2005, raced up the charts last season to ninth. That's where they should stay this year.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Bruins also return 10 starters on offense, and have two quarterbacks they can win with — Ben Olson and Patrick Cowan — with Olson winning the job in spring. DE Bruce Davis had 12.5 sacks last season. Chris Markey is a 1,000-yard rusher.

THE BAD NEWS: All-American kicker Justin Medlock came to the rescue last season when the offense bogged down. UCLA needs to be better in the red zone. Karl Dorrell is still searching for stability on offense; he's on his fourth coordinator in five years.

OUR CALL: This is UCLA's time. Nine of the defensive starters are seniors. Seven offensive starters are seniors. If the Bruins could be trusted to be more consistent, the ranking would be even higher.

23. AUBURN

Overshadowed in offseason, but they'll be fine

There was a little something going on this offseason at that cross-state school in Tuscaloosa, but Tigers fans happily remind the Tide faithful about which team has won five in a row in the series. And, oh by the way, Tommy Tuberville is 3-2 against ex-LSU coach Nick Saban. This won't be the best team Tuberville has put out there, but he's basically been good for eight or nine wins while reloading ... and he gets Saint Nick at home this year.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Brandon Cox has had his ups and downs, but he's a senior quarterback who should have a good year with a talented group of young runners. The defensive line, with Quentin Groves and Sen'Derrick Marks, is one of the best in the SEC.

THE BAD NEWS: Auburn plays only four road games (hey, that's good!), but might not be favored in any (hey, that's bad). The Tigers go to Florida, Arkansas, LSU and Georgia, and have to replace their leading rusher, receiver, tackler, cornerback and all-star punting/kicking combo.

OUR CALL: It's not unreasonable to think that Auburn will take care of all of its business at home. So, no matter what happens on the road, that's at least an 8-4 regular season ... which translates nicely into No. 23 in the country, we'd say.

24. BOSTON COLLEGE

Turning loose the offense: Good or bad?

The Steady Eddie Eagles are different. Not a lot different. They don't need to be. Eighteen starters are back from a team that went 10-3, so this doesn't need to be a case of BC Gone Wild. But the man roaming the sideline is no longer the stolid Tom O'Brien, it is Jeff Jagodzinski, and the ex-Green Bay offensive coordinator will be a little more looseygoosey with the playbook. It's a perfect time to do that because senior QB Matt Ryan is the best in the ACC.

THE GOOD NEWS: The entire defensive front seven returns, including immovable tackle B.J. Raji. The power running game is still there with veterans L.V. Whitworth and Andre Callender. Jeff Smith, a more electric runner, needs touches, too.

THE BAD NEWS: Offensive line coach Jim Turner resigned in late April over philosophical differences in the direction of the program. Hmmm. The jury is out on Jagodzinski, who has a strong resume as an assistant, but has never been a head coach before.

OUR CALL: Those three losses last season came by a total of 12 points. In a pick-em ACC, BC has as good a shot as any. But what if eight, nine wins and a non-New Year's Bowl is simply this program's level?

25. NEBRASKA

Big Red baby steps in the right direction

Huskers fans haven't appreciated the fact that Bill Callahan has improved in each of his three seasons. Some Big Red fans, though, are running out of patience. Let's take baby steps first. Big 12 North last year. Big 12 this year? OK, that's too much to ask. Thing is, it does look like the Nebraska product on the field could be better again, but the hardest part is overtaking the now-established monsters of the Big 12.

THE GOOD NEWS: Callahan has had time to recruit his type of offensive talent, which is significant. Arizona State transfer Sam Keller and Joe Ganz were portrayed as being neck-and-neck at quarterback. Go with Keller and his pro arm. The spring injury to TB Marlon Lucky was ominous, but he should be OK for fall.

THE BAD NEWS: The Huskers have to beat somebody. They got to 9-5 last year playing respectably, but losing to USC, Texas, Oklahoma and Auburn. A rematch with USC in Lincoln in September will show if Nebraska is ready to join the national stage again.

OUR CALL: Look for more improvement, but not as fast as Nebraskans want. Count on the Huskers stiff-arming an explosive Missouri team for a division title, with Big Red getting nine or 10 wins and a nice bowl game.

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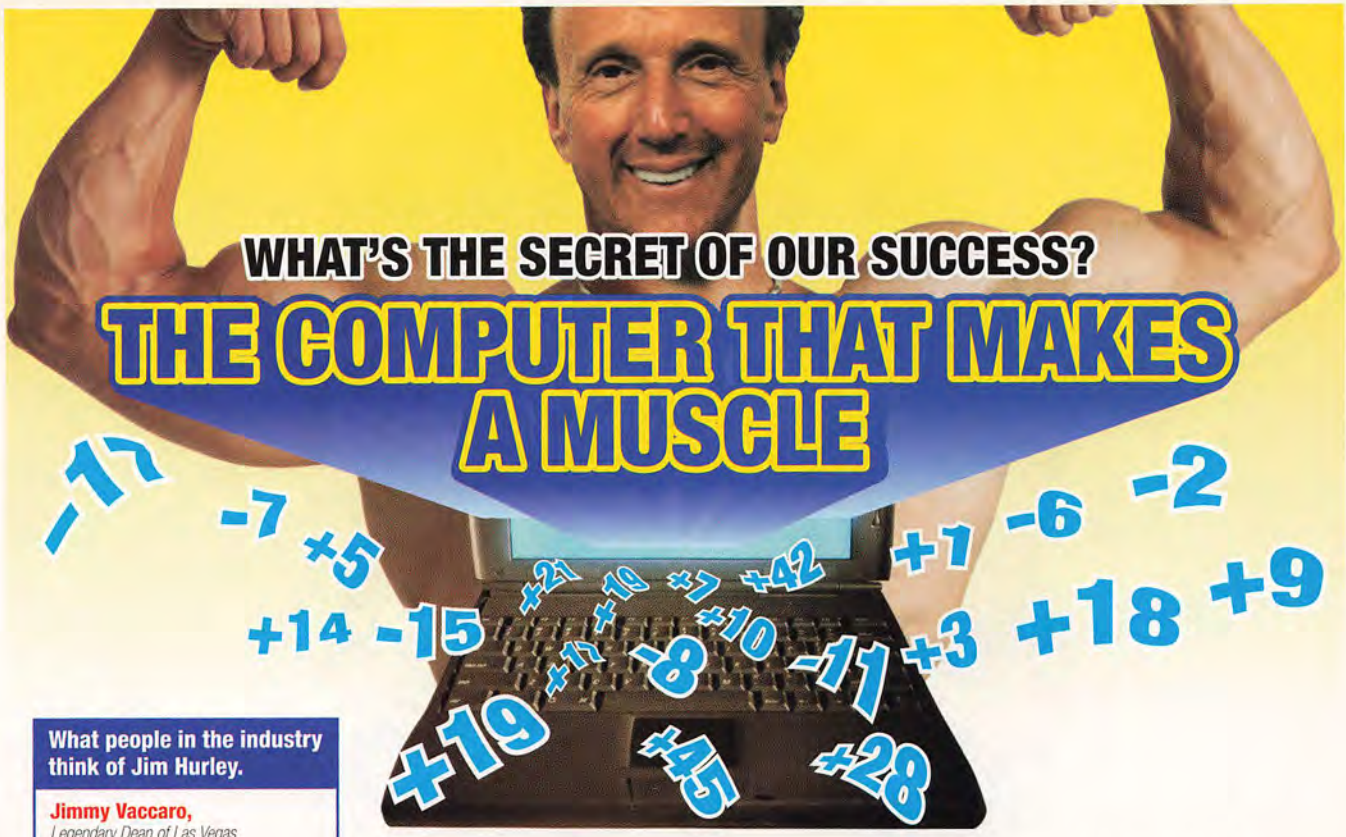
RATING THE TEAMS 1-119

1. USC	Pac-10	1	6. Wisconsin	Big Ten	2	11. Florida	SEC	3	16. Rutgers	Big East	3	21. Florida State	ACC	3
2. LSU	SEC	1	7. Tennessee	SEC	2	12. Cal	Pac-10	2	17. Georgia	SEC	5	22. UCLA	Pac-10	3
3. Michigan	Big Ten	1	8. Virginia Tech	ACC	1	13. Ohio State	Big Ten	3	18. Texas A&M	Big 12	3	23. Auburn	SEC	6
4. West Virginia	Big East	1	9. Louisville	Big East	2	14. Arkansas	SEC	4	19. Hawaii	WAC	1	24. Boston College	ACC	4
5. Texas	Big 12	1	10. Oklahoma	Big 12	2	15. TCU	MWC	1	20. Wake Forest	ACC	2	25. Nebraska	Big 12	4

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
26.	South Florida	Big East	4	Sophomore QB Matt Grothe could lead chase to Big East title.
27.	Iowa	Big Ten	4	This sure helps: Hawkeyes don't have to play Michigan or Ohio St.
28.	Missouri	Big 12	5	Has enough offensive firepower to be a factor in North race.
29.	Boise State	WAC	2	National darlings won't be hailed at Fresno State and Hawaii.
30.	Arizona State	Pac-10	4	Dennis Erickson will be in Tempe long enough to elevate program.
31.	Georgia Tech	ACC	5	Without WR Calvin Johnson, another super defense is the buzz.
32.	Oregon State	Pac-10	5	Play of new QB will determine if Beavers ascend into Top 25.
33.	Clemson	ACC	6	RB combo James Davis and C.J. Spiller rivals Arkansas duo.
34.	Alabama	SEC	7	Riot in Tuscaloosa if Tide isn't in Top 10 within two years.
35.	Penn State	Big Ten	5	QB Anthony Morelli was destined for greatness; his last chance.
36.	Notre Dame	IND	1	The lull before the Irish storm? Watch out in '08 and beyond.
37.	Virginia	ACC	7	Returns nearly intact; has a good shot in deep ACC.
38.	Miami	ACC	8	Will offense wake from its slumber? 'Canes defense is top-rate.
39.	Houston	C-USA	1	Ample talent surrounding new QB for defending C-USA champs.
40.	South Carolina	SEC	8	Spurrier's program improving, but moving up in SEC is so tough.
41.	Southern Miss	C-USA	2	East champs back for more behind strong running game.
42.	Oklahoma State	Big 12	6	Shootouts, not shutouts, should remain in vogue in Stillwater.
43.	Texas Tech	Big 12	7	Offense rolls on with QB Graham Harrell, RB Shannon Woods.
44.	BYU	MWC	2	New QB, but Cougars back to where bowl trips should be normal.
45.	Utah	MWC	3	QB Brian Johnson will have Utes in customary MWC contention.
46.	Arizona	Pac-10	6	Can fall back on its D, but Stoops bets on new spread offense.
47.	Oregon	Pac-10	7	Middle of Pac-10 is so tight; Ducks could end up much higher.
48.	Kentucky	SEC	9	Job-saving Rich Brooks has another exciting offense, bowl hopes.
49.	Illinois	Big Ten	6	All of Ron Zook's top-notch recruiting seems ready to pay off.
50.	Tulsa	C-USA	3	Coaching situation turned out fine with Todd Graham, Gus Malzahn.
51.	Purdue	Big Ten	7	Offense is a given; defensive front has to grow more muscles.
52.	Cincinnati	Big East	5	Beat UCF and Rutgers last season ... not a team to overlook.
53.	N.C. State	ACC	9	Tom O'Brien has a proven track record with disciplined approach.
54.	Central Michigan	MAC	1	New coach, but return of QB Dan LeFevour means repeat title.
55.	Kansas State	Big 12	8	Seven wins in Ron Prince's debut season; K-State climbing again.
56.	Maryland	ACC	10	Iffy quarterback situation makes a return to nine victories unlikely.
57.	Northwestern	Big Ten	8	Cats to have better offense in coach Pat Fitzgerald's second year.
58.	Kansas	Big 12	9	Jayhawks have to hold up better in fourth quarter this season.
59.	Michigan State	Big Ten	9	New coach Mark Dantonio has traditional Big Ten football values.
60.	Pittsburgh	Big East	6	Coach Dave Wannstedt keeps stockpiling good talent.
61.	Fresno State	WAC	3	With talent on hand, last year's 4-8 season was an aberration.
62.	Western Michigan	MAC	2	17 starters back for a team that nearly reached MAC title game.
63.	San Jose State	WAC	4	Getting SJSU to bowl was one of 2006's best coaching jobs.
64.	Navy	IND	2	Bowl deal in place: Six victories puts Navy into Poinsettia Bowl.
65.	SMU	C-USA	4	Ponies will build and build around sophomore QB Justin Willis.
66.	Washington	Pac-10	8	Future is now: Huskies turn to redshirt freshman Jake Locker.
67.	UTEP	C-USA	5	Miners slumped to 5-7 in coach Mike Price's third season.
68.	Minnesota	Big Ten	10	Good trade-off: Bowl loss netted Gophers coach Tim Brewster.
69.	Wyoming	MWC	4	Opening against Virginia at home is great opportunity for 'Boys.
70.	Mississippi State	SEC	10	Still buried in SEC, but this will be Sylvester Croom's best team.
71.	Washington State	Pac-10	9	Good-guy Bill Doba can't withstand many more of these seasons.
72.	New Mexico	MWC	5	Young stars on offense give Lobos hope of climbing higher in MWC.

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
73.	Kent State	MAC	3	Big-play defense gives Flashes chance to win any MAC game.
74.	Colorado	Big 12	10	16 starters return, but difficult schedule makes .500 best hope.
75.	Baylor	Big 12	11	Still too many holes for Bears to end 13-year bowl drought.
76.	Indiana	Big Ten	11	Can at least look forward to Kellen Lewis-James Hardy connection.
77.	Ole Miss	SEC	11	Despite 17 returning starters, Ed Orgeron's rebuilding goes on.
78.	Vanderbilt	SEC	12	Vandy won't be a pushover, but not much chance for a bowl. Sigh.
79.	Stanford	Pac-10	10	Coach Jim Harbaugh is talking a good game; will team play one?
80.	North Carolina	ACC	11	Heels hit the coaching bonanza (Butch Davis) ... just give it time.
81.	Troy	Sun Belt	1	Behind QB Omar Haugabook, Trojans should repeat in Sun Belt.
82.	Connecticut	Big East	7	Some improvement in sight; but how much?
83.	Colorado State	MWC	6	Veteran lineup tries to give Sonny Lubick (15th year) a winner again.
84.	Nevada	WAC	5	'Pistol' offense will have a new triggerman ... but who?
85.	Ohio	MAC	4	Running back Kalvin McRae can't do it all for the Bobcats.
86.	Akron	MAC	5	Downgraded expectations for a team that loses QB Luke Getsy.
87.	East Carolina	C-USA	6	Personnel losses too great to expect a repeat bowl performance.
88.	Toledo	MAC	6	Rockets are not lacking for stars on offense ... well, except for QB.
89.	Syracuse	Big East	8	Greg Robinson (5-18 in two years) is now starting over at QB.
90.	Iowa State	Big 12	12	Chizik era could open even rockier than end to McCarney's years.
91.	UCF	C-USA	7	Hmmm ... up-and-down Knights technically due for an "up."
92.	Marshall	C-USA	8	Not taking C-USA by storm; Herd is 9-14 overall in past two years.
93.	Air Force	MWC	7	New look with coach Troy Calhoun and no more triple option.
94.	Miami (Ohio)	MAC	7	A 2-10 mark was unlike Miami, but it won't turn around quickly.
95.	New Mexico State	WAC	6	Hal Mumme's passing attack now looks up to speed at NMSU.
96.	La.-Monroe	Sun Belt	2	Strong finish in 2006 indicates a push to league title in 2007.
97.	Rice	C-USA	9	Not enough defense to sneak into a bowl, like last season.
98.	Duke	ACC	12	Enters season with nation's longest losing streak — 20 games.
99.	San Diego State	MWC	8	Just baby steps in coach Chuck Long's second season.
100.	Middle Tennessee	Sun Belt	3	Another strong defense back from team that went 6-1 in Sun Belt.
101.	Ball State	MAC	8	Defense figures to keep holding back the Cardinals.
102.	UNLV	MWC	9	Some nice parts, but the Rebels are still far from whole.
103.	La.-Lafayette	Sun Belt	4	Cajuns have enough offense to push higher in tight Sun Belt race.
104.	Memphis	C-USA	10	Tommy West hopes to go north with strong group of transfers.
105.	Northern Illinois	MAC	9	No more Garrett Wolfe; passing and defense take center stage.
106.	Bowling Green	MAC	10	Still young; trying to bounce back from uncharacteristic 4-8 year.
107.	UAB	C-USA	11	Starting over across the board, including coach Neil Callaway.
108.	Florida Atlantic	Sun Belt	5	20 starters return, so maybe these guys can now get over hump.
109.	Arkansas State	Sun Belt	6	Promising young players on offense for team that scored 15.2 ppg.
110.	Idaho	WAC	7	Erickson Revival Tour left town; UI on fourth coach in five years.
111.	Tulane	C-USA	12	Bob Toledo packs West Coast offense in return to head coaching.
112.	North Texas	Sun Belt	7	Pigskins will be flying in new coach Todd Dodge's spread offense.
113.	Louisiana Tech	WAC	8	Outlook brightens with arrival of young head coach Derek Dooley.
114.	Army	IND	3	NFL veteran Stan Brock takes over for retired Bobby Ross.
115.	Eastern Michigan	MAC	11	Only one win last season ... but, hey, 17 starters are back.
116.	Buffalo	MAC	12	Second-year coach might start showing results ... in Year 3.
117.	Utah State	WAC	9	Punchless Aggies turn to Darrell Dickey to coordinate offense.
118.	Temple	MAC	13	Owls find a conference home, but they're living in the basement.
119.	Fla. International	Sun Belt	8	Welcome to head coaching: Mario Cristobal takes over 0-12 team.



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S16	Navy	(+1)	Stanford	37-9	W
O 1	Ravens	(+2)	Chargers	16-13	W
O 7	Arkansas	(+15)	'Bama	27-10	W
O12	Va Tech	(↓42)	Bost Coll	3-22	W
O29	Cowboys	(+5)	Panthers	35-14	W
N11	Wake For	(+8½)	Fla St	30-0	W
N16	West Va	(-11)	Pittsbg	45-27	W
N25	Wake For	(+1½)	Maryland	38-24	W
D21	BYU	(-3)	Oregon	38-8	W
D24	Saints	(+3)	Giants	30-7	W
J21	Bears	(-2½)	Saints	39-14	W

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September NFL Golden Game
Won '06 Jets (+6) Bills 28-20

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Okay, you know where this is headed.
I want YOU to test the computer that makes a muscle and I've got an idea:

Last year TS 111 (with a little help from us humans) went 14-6 in August and 20-10 in September for a total of 34-16 (68%).

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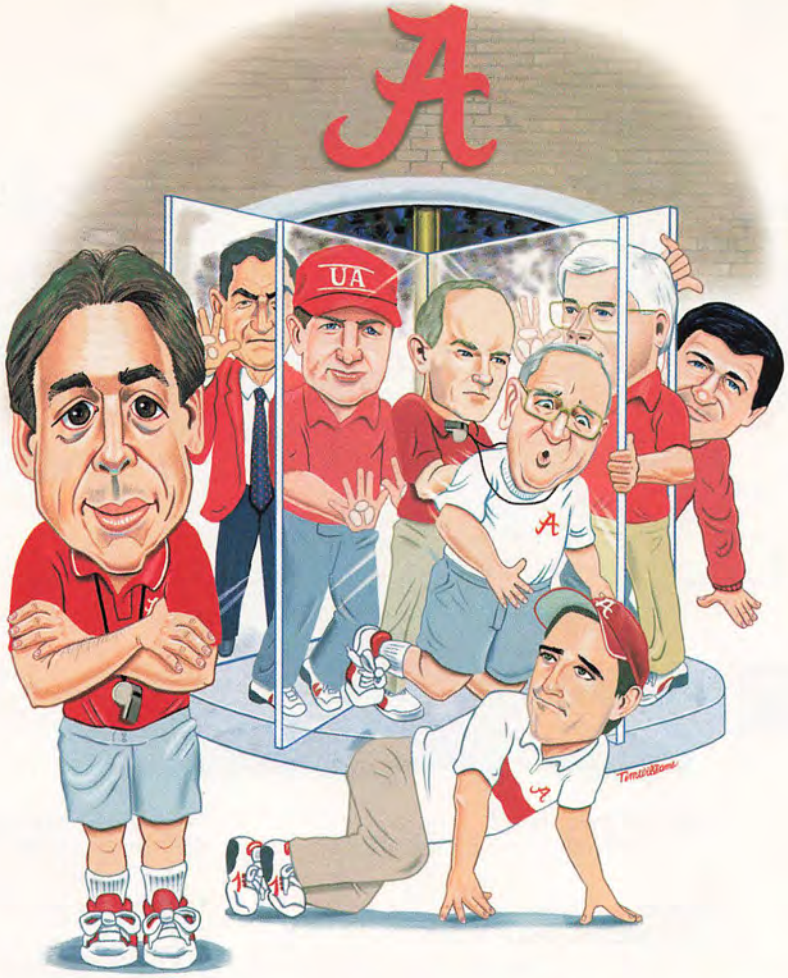


IS SABAN THE GUY?

A quarter century after Bear ... ... has Bama finally found a worthy replacement?

BY BEN COOK

With the words, "There comes a time in every profession when you need to hang it up and that time has come for me," Paul W. Bryant ended his 25 years as the head football coach of the Alabama Crimson Tide.

On that rainy morning of December 15, 1982, the couple of hundred people gathered in the meeting room on the second floor of the Alabama athletic complex knew they were seeing the end of an era — an era of greatness.

"This is my school ... my alma mater ... and I love it," Bryant said with deep conviction.

"I love the players, but in my opinion, they deserve better coaching than they've been getting from me this year and my stepping down is an effort to see that they get better coaching from someone else."

In the 25 years since, that hasn't happened.

Those watching the legendary coach step down that day didn't realize they were also sitting in on the beginning of what would ultimately be the darkest era in University of Alabama football history.

In the previous 25 years before that day, Alabama won 13 SEC championships, six national championships, 232 football games against 46 losses, and had 12 Top Five finishes ... with one football coach.

In the 24 years since that day, Alabama has gone through two NCAA probations, won three SEC champi-

onships, one national championship, and experienced just three top five finishes ... with seven football coaches (plus an interim).

Over that time, the Crimson Tide won 180 football games and lost 105.

In the process, Alabama has gone from being one of the most highly respected, elite college football programs in the country to a run-of-the-mill team sloshing around the middle of the SEC West. In the process, its head-coaching job became the butt of jokes nationally.

Let's see here ...

- Two Alabama coaches were dismissed in shame for off-the-field improprieties;
- Two stepped down the coaching ladder to bottom-feeding jobs (one in the NFL and one in the conference);
- One skipped town rather than face the NCAA storm;
- One was dismissed because of stubbornness;
- One got fed up and told the school to stick it (he was the best one to date).

Being an Alabama fan over the past 24 years has been tough.

When Bryant passed the torch to his handpicked successor, Ray Perkins, there was reason to believe not much would change. Perkins had played for Bryant, had been one of Bryant's favorite players, and had made a positive impression as a head coach in the NFL with the New York Giants before returning to his alma mater.

But things did change.

Six weeks after Bryant retired, he passed away. Suddenly Perkins became not only the head coach but the athletic director as well. Perkins was everything Bryant was not. Perkins was cold and aloof to fans and media, but more importantly, he appeared cold and aloof to the things Bryant had built.

The most obvious sign — and perhaps the biggest mistake Perkins made — that things had changed came when the 1983 Crimson Tide hit the practice field. Bryant's tower was gone. The image of Bryant climbing those winding steps to the tower platform and peering out over the practice field was dear to the heart of every Alabama fan. But in the fall of 1983 the tower was nowhere to be found.

Perkins had it torn down and stored in a far corner of the athletic complex. Maybe Perkins just didn't like heights and figured it was a waste of space, but Alabama fans took it as Perkins trying to get rid of every sign of Bryant.

Perkins did put his stamp on the Alabama program, though. He brought

PHOTO BY MANNY MILLAN/ICON SMI

1980: Head coach Paul "Bear" Bryant of the Alabama Crimson Tide.

back something Alabama had not endured since before Bryant — a losing season.

Perkins went 5-6 in his second season, snapping Alabama's streak of winning seasons at 26. After four years, Perkins took big bucks to take over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the NFL ... and soon faded into coaching obscurity.

Next came the embarrassing three-year coaching tenure of Bill Curry, years that were highlighted by a homecoming loss to Ole Miss in which Alabama failed to complete a pass; the hurricane game in which Curry refused to take his team to play Texas A&M because Hurricane Gilbert was scheduled to hit Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula 800 miles away (which would be like canceling a game in Tuscaloosa if a hurricane was about to hit Miami); and a first trip with an Alabama team into Jordan-Hare Stadium in Auburn.

Following the completion-less game against Ole Miss, Curry claimed a disgruntled fan threw a brick through his office window. The move generated a lot of talk in the press and deflected criticism off the coach and onto the insensitive fan.

Most folks never took the time to consider the plausibility of how strong a person would have to be to throw a brick from the ground and break a reinforced second-floor window at Coleman Coliseum, a feat that would be almost impossible unless that person also changed his clothes in a telephone booth.

As for the hurricane game, it just so happened that when the game was originally scheduled in early September, Alabama's starting quarterback David Smith was out with a broken collarbone.

The day of the game dawned bright and beautiful in College Station, and national television had live shots of students in shorts and halter-tops playing Frisbee in the bright sunshine under brilliant blue skies. It was an embarrassment that Alabama has never quite lived down. By the time the game was rescheduled, Smith was healthy and led Alabama to a victory, so Curry's ploy was successful.

And then, of course, Curry was 0-for-lifetime against Auburn, which didn't set well with Alabama fans.

After Curry scurried off to Kentucky and out of the coaching spotlight, Gene Stallings was named the head coach. He was the closest thing to Bryant that Alabama could find, and he brought the largest amount of success on the field to the Capstone since Bryant. He also brought the NCAA to town.

Under Stallings, Alabama won a lot of football games and the 1992 national championship. But also under Stallings, Alabama's years of avoiding run-ins with the NCAA came to an end as the NCAA almost set up a branch office in Tuscaloosa.

Stallings not only battled the NCAA, he battled athletic director Bob Bockrath. Finally, he had enough and walked away from the job after the 1996 season, but by then the damage had been done with the NCAA.

Since Stallings' departure, a series of coaching blunders have followed. In the aftermath of Stallings' departure, Bockrath hired Mike DuBose because of a flood of support from Alabama supporters, despite the fact that Bockrath wanted Frank Beamer from Virginia Tech (at a time when he probably could have gotten Beamer).

DuBose posted two losing seasons and one surprising SEC championship in four years, but he was dismissed after an affair with his secretary came to light. He lied to university administrators in an effort to cover it up, but it wasn't until after a three-win season in 2000 that he was shown the door.

Dennis Franchione came on board and had two winning seasons. He asked his players to "hold the rope" as Alabama tried to weather NCAA sanctions, but he abruptly let go of the rope himself and bolted for Texas A&M.

He was replaced by an odd, out-of-region, out-of-the-family choice — Mike Price from Washington State. Price coached one game — the 2003

spring game — and then made an ill-fated trip to a strip club and, eventually, the unemployment line.

Price was replaced by the one coach who should have been successful — Mike Shula. He was young, had the name and had been a Tide quarterback himself under Ray Perkins. But he had never been a head coach before and it showed.

In Shula's four years, his teams won only one game of substance — against Florida in 2005, when the Tide inexplicably won 10 games.

In the past 24 years, Alabama has lost games to Northern Illinois, Louisiana Tech, Hawaii and Central Florida. It went through one entire season without winning a single game in Bryant-Denny Stadium. The Crimson Tide had to forfeit 10 games due to NCAA sanctions.

It is those bad times in Tuscaloosa that led to the rapid courting and eventual offseason hiring of Nick Saban, who won the 2003 BCS national title at LSU. Alabama *had* to have him.

It could not afford to take no for an answer, especially after striking out with Steve Spurrier and Rich Rodriguez and heaven knows who else. When the Tide looked like it was getting none of its top choices, it just kept going back to Saban and upping the ante. Finally, in early January, he said yes.

And Alabama fans rejoiced, figuring he might be *the one*.

Time will tell, for other schools steeped in college football tradition have been down this path, fooled as they seek to reclaim past glory, picking up and discarding coaches like peanut shells along the way.

After Barry Switzer, Oklahoma went through Gary Gibbs, Howard Schnellenberger and John Blake before finding a national champion in Bob Stoops.

After John Robinson, USC tried Ted Tollner, Larry Smith, Robinson again, and Paul Hackett before finding a multiple national champion in Pete Carroll.

Notre Dame has ripped through four head coaches in 10 years, including George O'Leary, who (like Price at Alabama) never coached a game because of off-field issues.

Washington is on its fourth coach since Don James stepped down in 1992, with the program falling into disrepair.

It all leads back to this: It is often said that pro sports are all about the players and college sports are all about the coaches. They make the program. They *are* the program.

Like Bear once was.

Like Alabama now hopes Nick Saban can be. ■

RAISING THE ROOF ON COACHING SALARIES

BY ANTHONY GIMINO

Alabama has paid for its ill-fated coaching hires of the past.

Have they learned? Maybe, but the Tide sure is going to have to pay.

The Crimson Tide, still urgently searching for a long-term answer to Bear Bryant, made Nick Saban college football's first $4 million a year head coach, guaranteeing an eight-year, $32-million package to the Miami Dolphins coach. All he has to do now is beat Auburn and win a national title.

It's no longer accurate to say salaries for college football head coaches — and college basketball coaches, for that matter — are escalating. It's more like they are strapped to a rocket and headed to the stars.

It was only a dozen years ago, in 1995, when Florida State made Bobby Bowden the first million-dollar head football coach. How quaint.

A few years later, Steve Spurrier, then at Florida, topped $2 million.

Heading into the 2001 season, there were 18 millionaire head coaches.

As we head into this season, there are close to 50.

"I thought a million dollars was a lot," NCAA president Myles Brand said in the spring. "But when we moved away from that — in one case to a $4 million a year contract — I think we have to begin to ask some very hard questions, (such as) whether you can justify it or not in terms of rate of return. It raises the question of propriety for colleges and universities."

It's a coaching arms race. It's market driven. Everyone understands that much.

If half of the teams in the SEC are paying their college football head coach at least nearly $1.5 million per, Alabama would lose all face if it doled out a measly (yes, tongue in cheek here) cool mil for the most important position in the state.

If $4 million is today's rate for a coach who has won a national championship, as Saban has, then it's a pretty good bet that in due time, the asking price will be $5 million.

"There is very much an attitude of 'I don't want my coach to be caught on the short end,'" said Arizona athletic director Jim Livengood. "The minute one or two coaches go up in salary, everybody else has to catch him or go a dollar above."

At the end of Saban's eight years, he might look like a bargain.

"The market between the NFL and the college coaches has collapsed," Brand said. "The pay rates for the very highest celebrity coaches are similar."

In the meantime, the rift between the haves and the have-nots in college football keeps growing. Last season, the average head coaching salary was almost $1 million, according to a report in USA Today.

Teams in the BCS conferences, of course, are driving the bus, and a wild offseason with 23 coaching changes helped steer that bus toward a yet unforeseen precipice.

Where's the breaking point?

"Each school is going to have to figure that out for themselves," Brand said.

With the big money comes big pressure, on athletic directors and coaches. Contract extensions provide security for no one.

Arizona State athletic director Lisa Love extended the contract of Dirk Koetter several months before she fired him last year. Mike Shula received a $650,000 raise and two extra years on his Alabama contract in May 2006. He was booted by the end of November.

"One of the reasons we have had so many quick coaching changes is that people expect change yesterday," Livengood said. "Not today. Not tomorrow. Yesterday."

If the whole system seems out of whack, consider a radio debate — dubbed "Is College Football Overemphasized?"

Yes, it was held more than 50 years ago.

Bryant, then the head coach at Texas A&M, faced off with an English professor, Thomas Mayo. As related in the biography, *The Last Coach*, Bryant initially played polite before this memorable exchange:

"Sir, how many people watch you give a final exam?" Bryant asked.

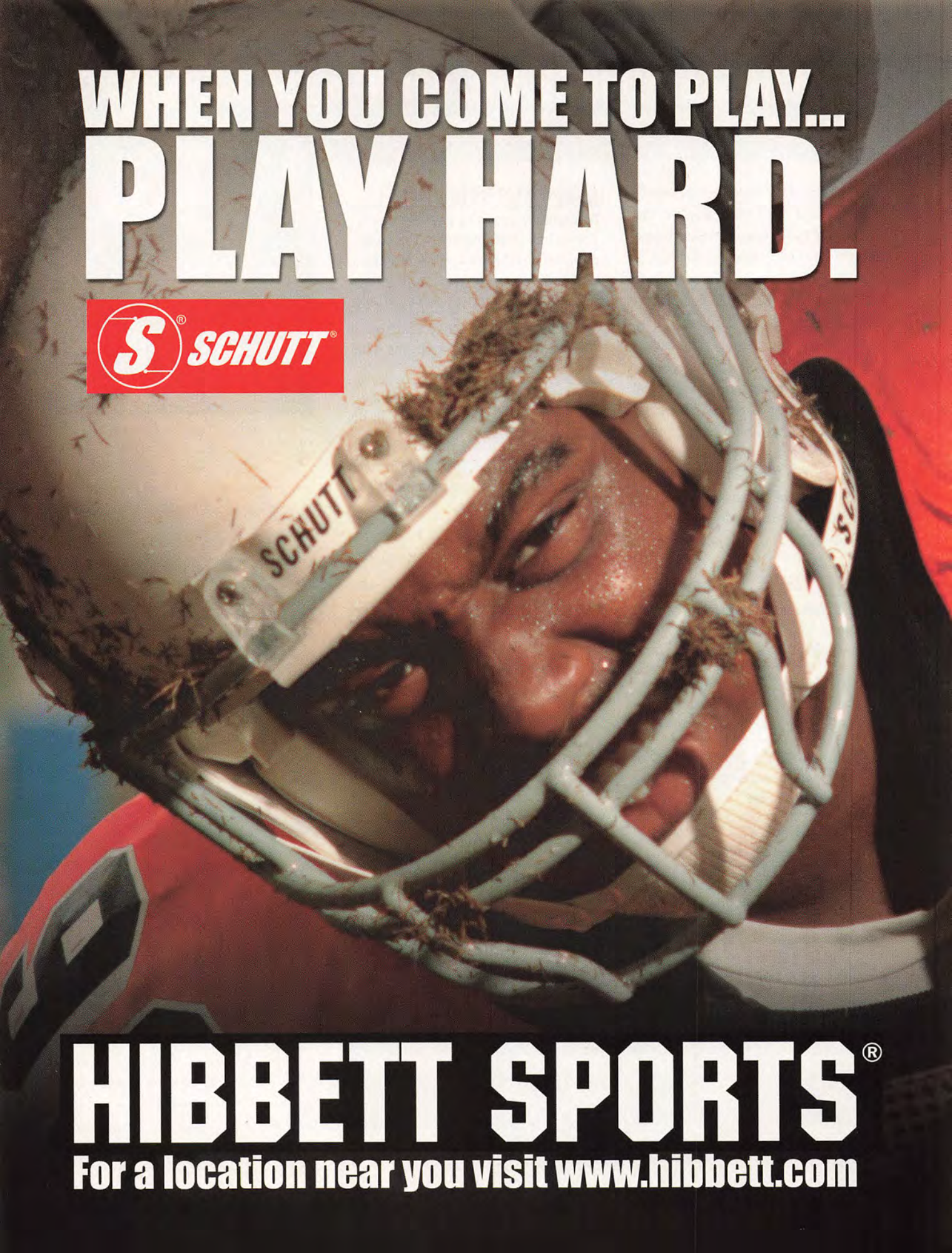
"About 50," Mayo answered.

"Well," Bryant countered, "I have 50,000 watch me when I give mine, every Saturday."

Bryant, at the time, was making $25,000 per year.

It was a bargain then.

All these years later, the salary ceiling is ... well, through the roof. ■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555 WHISTLES SINCE THE BEAR... AND COUNTING

In the 25 years since Bear Bryant walked out of the Liberty Bowl at the end of the 1982 season, major college football has had 555 head coaches.

That's an average of 4.66 coaches for each of the 119 programs. Not including this year's 23 new coaches, the other 532 guys have graced the sideline for an average of only 4.4 years ... not surprising, considering the typical initial contract at a school is for four or five years. That's a lot of turnover, and nowhere more than across the street from the Bear Bryant Museum. Nick Saban is the ninth Alabama coach (including an interim) since the Bear — about twice the national average.

HIGH TURNOVER

Here's a glance at the schools where the athletic director needs to be continually on the lookout for a head coach:

9	**ALABAMA** | Gene Stallings' seven years is the longest for anybody in Tuscaloosa.
8	**BOISE STATE** | Last three left for bigs; will Chris Petersen make a long-term home?
8	**SAN JOSE STATE** | Dick Tomey has stopped the bleeding.
8	**TULSA** | Can Todd Graham win AND stay more than one contract?
7	**10 PROGRAMS** | Notre Dame, Florida, LSU are almost keeping pace with Tide.

LOW TURNOVER

Consistency seems to pay: Which comes first, the loyalty by the coach or the school? Here are the programs that have changed coaches only once in the past 24 years ... or not at all:

1	**PENN STATE** | Enjoy JoePa while you still can — he's in his 42nd season.
1	**FLORIDA STATE** | Enjoy Bobby while you still can — he's in his 32nd season.
2	**VIRGINIA TECH** | Frank Beamer (21st season) is assuming that legendary status.
2	**TENNESSEE** | Phillip Fulmer (16th) matches Johnny Majors' tenure this year.
2	**OREGON** | After Rich Brooks' success, Mike Bellotti (13th) has taken it to another level.
2	**FRESNO STATE** | Pat Hill (11th) fits just as well as Jim Sweeney did.
2	**IOWA** | Kirk Ferentz (ninth) replaced Hayden Fry seamlessly.
2	**WEST VIRGINIA** | Don Nehlen-to-Rich Rodriguez (seventh) has worked out nicely.
2	**VIRGINIA** | Al Groh (seventh) needs to get Cavs back in the bowl biz.

NOTE: Troy State (Larry Blakeney) and South Florida (Jim Leavitt) are starting season number 17 and 11 at their schools, although they have only been in Div. I-A for a short time.

PHOTO BY HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

PAUL "BEAR" BRYANT

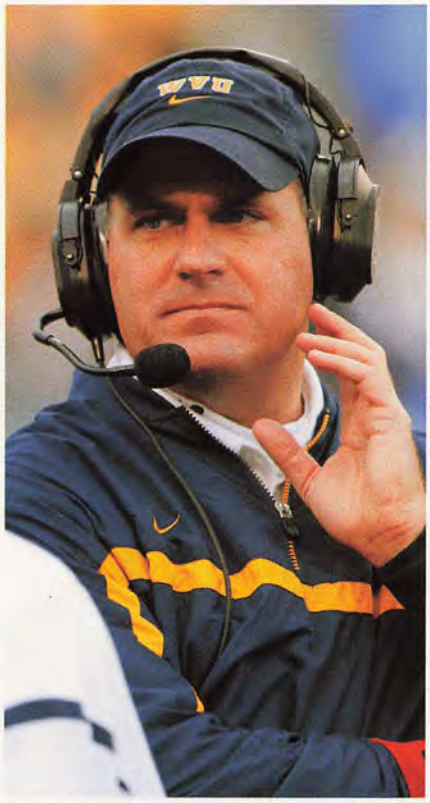
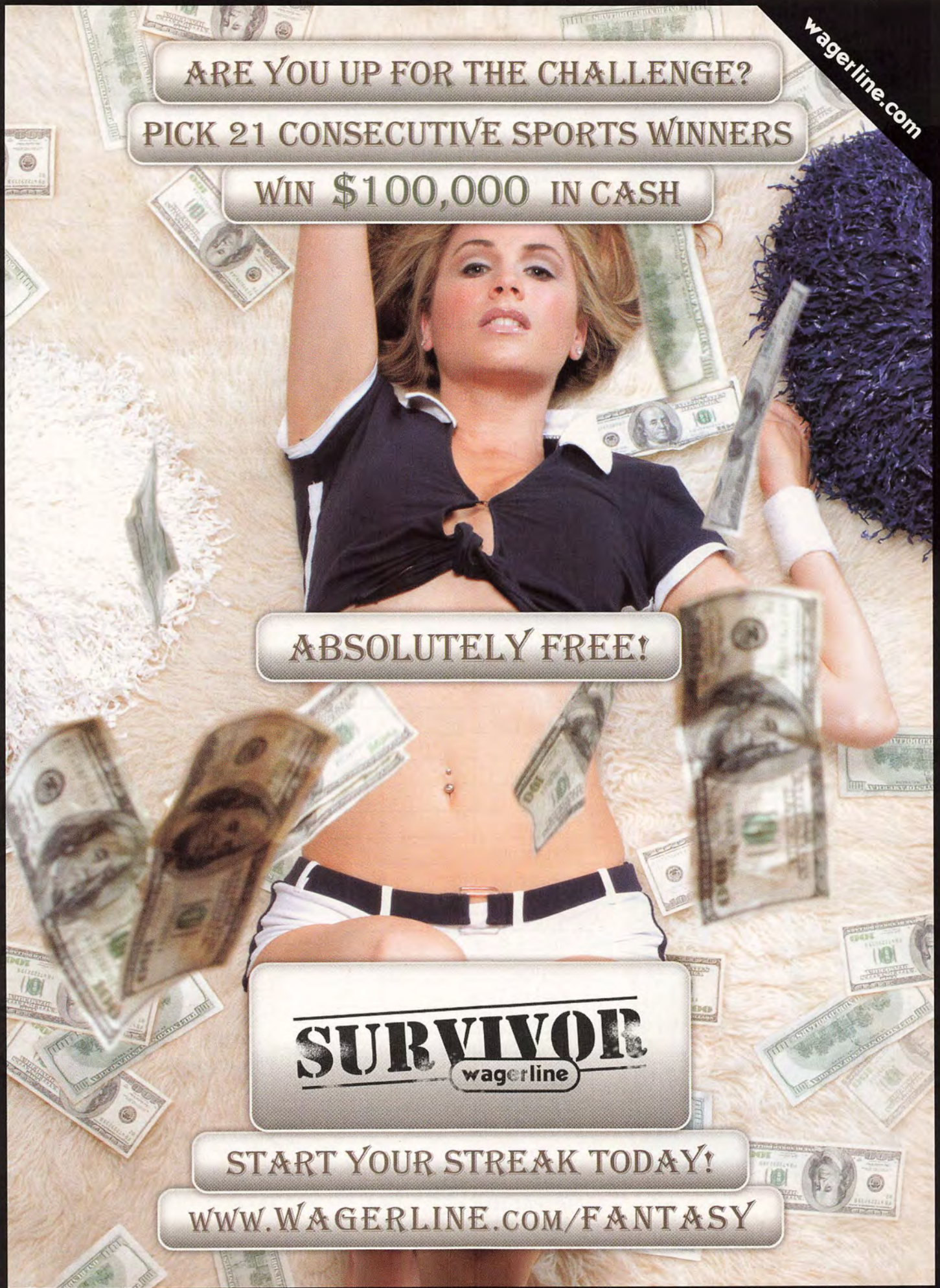


PHOTO BY GEORGE GOJKOVICH/GETTY IMAGES

(ABOVE) "The Bear" was the picture of stability at Alabama. Rich Rodriguez successfully replaced a legend at West Virginia.

PHOTO BY GARY I. ROTHSTEIN/ICON SMI

(LEFT) Future Alabama coach Nick Saban with two legends: Joe Paterno and Bobby Bowden at the 2006 Orange Bowl.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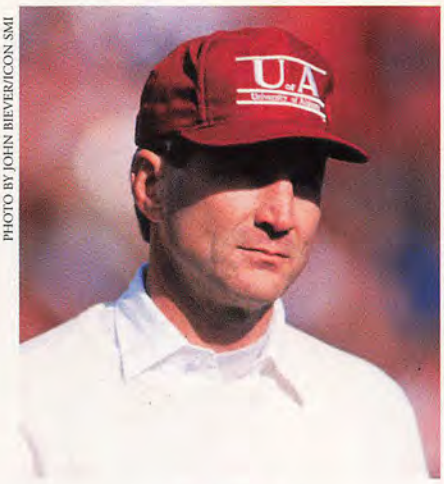

PHOTO BY JOHN BIEVER/ICON SMI

Bill Curry

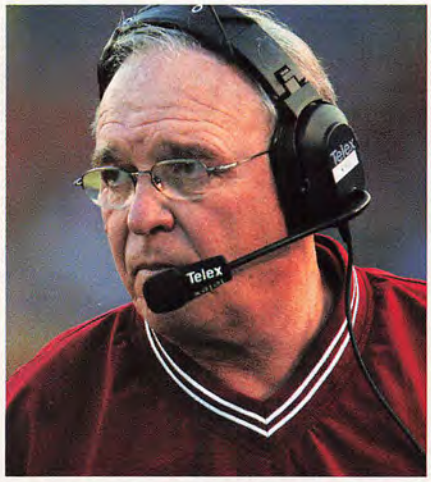

PHOTO BY STEPHEN DUNN/GETTY IMAGES

Mike Price

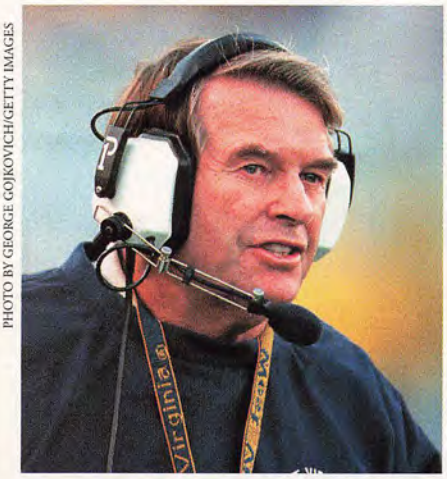

PHOTO BY GEORGE GOJKOVICH/GETTY IMAGES

Don Nehlen

COACHING CHANGES IN BCS CONFERENCES

A conference list is instructive, indicating where the big pressure is. Not surprisingly, the SEC leads the list. Here's the school-by-school rundown of how many coaches each BCS program has had since the beginning of the 1983 season (in all cases we're including interims, which also indicate a higher level of instability/dissatisfaction):

SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE	(64)
Tennessee	2
Auburn	4
Georgia	4
Mississippi State	4
Kentucky	5
Mississippi	5
South Carolina	5
Arkansas	6
Vanderbilt	6
Florida	7
Louisiana State	7
Alabama	9

BIG 12 CONFERENCE	(53)
Texas A&M	3
Iowa State	4
Kansas State	4
Nebraska	4
Texas	4
Texas Tech	4
Baylor	5
Colorado	5
Kansas	5
Missouri	5
Oklahoma	5
Oklahoma State	5

ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE	(51)
Florida State	1
Virginia	2
Virginia Tech	2
Clemson	4
North Carolina State	4
Wake Forest	4
Maryland	5
North Carolina	5
Boston College	6
Duke	6
Georgia Tech	6
Miami, Fla.	6

PACIFIC-10 CONFERENCE	(51)
Oregon	2
UCLA	4
Washington State	4
Arizona	5
Washington	5
Arizona State	6
California	6
Oregon State	6
Southern California	6
Stanford	7

BIG TEN CONFERENCE	(45)
Penn State	1
Iowa	2
Michigan	3
Ohio State	3
Purdue	4
Illinois	5
Indiana	5
Northwestern	5
Wisconsin	5
Michigan State	6
Minnesota	6

BIG EAST CONFERENCE	(30)
Connecticut (2000)	1
South Florida (2005)	1
West Virginia	2
Syracuse	3
Rutgers	5
Cincinnati	6
Louisville	6
Pittsburgh	6

MAJOR INDEPENDENTS	(7)
Notre Dame	7

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ROCK STAR IN SHOULDER PADS

FLORIDA'S TIM TEBOW LIVING UP TO THE HYPE

BY MICHAEL DIROCCO

Tim Tebow is **The Chosen One**.

Florida's sophomore quarterback got that nickname because that was the title of an ESPN documentary about his senior season at Nease High School in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

But maybe a more appropriate nickname might be Elvis, because in Gainesville, Tebow is certainly The King.

The quarterback at the University of Florida is always going to be one of the most popular athletes on campus, recognized wherever he goes and besieged with autograph and photo requests, but it's at a different level with Tebow.

- Danny Wuerffel won the Heisman Trophy and national championship in 1996, but nobody asked him to sign a watermelon.
- Chris Leak just wrapped up a four-year career capped by the 2006 national title, but nobody asked him to sign their nose.
- Steve Spurrier won the 1966 Heisman Trophy and returned to lead his alma mater to the '96 title and change the way football was played in the Southeastern Conference, but nobody asked him to sign their baby's head.

None of them has a Chuck Norris facts-style website devoted to them, either — www.timtebowfacts.com.

All that has happened to Tebow since he arrived on campus in January 2006.

"I don't mind," the 6-3, 234-pounder said of the attention.

"I don't want to be that guy who gets upset when people come up to me. I still love hanging out with people and meeting people. I don't want to have that attitude at all.

"I want to treat others like I would want to be treated. When I was younger — I'm not where Danny Wuerffel was — but if someone looks up to me (the way I looked up to Wuerffel) and I say no, then I just think about how I would feel if he treated me like that."

The excessive attention was not exactly unexpected. Tebow was the No. 1 recruit in the country two years ago after throwing for 9,940 yards and a then-state record 95 touchdowns in a three-year career.

ESPN produced a one-hour documentary, titled *The Chosen One*, about his senior season and his recruitment. It highlighted Tebow's on-field accomplishments, but also examined his background and faith.

Tebow was home-schooled by his mother Pam, and his father Bob runs the Bob Tebow Evangelistic Association, which for the past 15 years has worked to spread the Gospel in the Philippines. Tim Tebow has traveled to that country and worked as a missionary with his father.

Tebow agreed to announce his college choice live on ESPN on Dec. 13, 2005, and the documentary aired later that night.

He endeared himself to his teammates and fans — and further added to his legend — as soon as he stepped on campus. He was such a ferocious competitor that he dove across the finish line ... during offseason conditioning drills ... *inside the Florida Gym*.

"There was no way he was going to win, but he still dove across," sophomore wide receiver Percy Harvin remembered. "Everyone was like, 'Good gracious.'

"He's got some screws loose, but we love it. He works hard, and you've got to respect it."

Tebow just laughed and shrugged when asked why he did it.

"I like to win, and I hate to lose, and that makes me do a lot of crazy stuff sometimes," he said. "I was just trying to go out there and work hard, and when other people see you go hard, it makes them want to go hard, too. A work ethic is contagious."

That was Tebow's first step in becoming a team leader, and he finished the journey in the moments before the 2006 spring game.

That's when he tried to jump in the Circle of Life drill, in which two players are matched one-on-one, offense vs. defense. Tebow was just settling into his stance, ready for the confrontation, when coach Urban Meyer grabbed him by the nape of the shoulder pads and pulled him away, eager to preserve his star recruit's health.

Tebow got all the contact he wanted during his freshman season. Playing in spot duty behind Leak, Tebow was the Gators' second-leading rusher (469 yards, eight TDs).

There's no concern about Tebow's ability as a runner, but there was some concern about the lefthander as a passer when the Gators began spring practice in March. A sore left shoulder, of all things, helped him allay those fears.

The ache forced Tebow to alter his mechanics and throwing motion throughout Florida's spring practice. That helped him learn to make different throws.

"He had to really pay attention and adjust his throwing motion slightly," offensive coordinator Dan Mullen said. "By doing that it really caused him to focus on how to throw the ball the right way. It's really helped him develop a touch, develop balance, develop consistency and accuracy in his throws."

Tebow showed all those things in Florida's spring game, completing 17 of 27 passes for 216 yards and three touchdowns.

"He's ready to go," Meyer said. "Tim Tebow is ready to play quarterback at Florida."

But is he ready to continue to handle the attention he gets? Tebow says yes because he's had enough practice by now.

"I can remember the first time he went out with us," said center Steve Rissler, who graduated in May. "He'd just be sitting back in a chair and these girls would just come and dance on him. He wouldn't really know what to do.

"He'd just kind of sit there and kind of look at them, and then they'd walk away. Then another one would come up."

Just like Elvis. ■

Photo By: Bob Leverone/TSN/ZUMA Press/Icon

SUPER SOPHOMORES

The spotlight is on Tim Tebow, but he's just part of exciting new talent at the position. Here are nine more sophomores to watch:

Josh Freeman | KANSAS STATE
JaMarcus Russell-sized QB with huge upside.

Matt Grothe | SOUTH FLORIDA
Pass-run threat was Big East Rookie of Year.

Dan LeFevour | CENTRAL MICHIGAN
MAC Freshman of Year led Chips to league title.

Kellen Lewis | INDIANA
Playmaker was team MVP, accounted for 19 TDs.

Colt McCoy | TEXAS
School-record 29 TD passes as a freshman.

Riley Skinner | WAKE FOREST
Helped carry Demon Deacons to ACC title.

Matthew Stafford | GEORGIA
Led wins over three ranked teams to end season.

Juice Williams | ILLINOIS
Ultra-athletic, but can he handle the passing?

Justin Willis | SMU
School-record 26 TDs, and only six INTs last year.

KEEPING THE FAITH

BY BILL SORRELL

If the Florida football team could enter the 2007 season where it left off in 2006, the defending national champions would still be ranked No. 1.

However, Tim Tebow, the Gators' superlative sophomore quarterback, has a different ranking for football in his poll of priorities — fourth.

"For all my priorities and everything in my life, my faith is number one. Family is number two, then academics. After that is football," said Tebow, who takes the reins from departing quarterback Chris Leak with the goal of returning to the promised land of national champions.

Being on a mission comes naturally for Tebow. He was born in the Philippines where his parents, Bob and Pam Tebow, were missionaries.

Tim Tebow has returned there three times to do mission work. Each July, Bob Tebow, president and lead evangelist of the Bob Tebow Evangelistic Association, leads a trip where high school and college students preach the gospel, direct sports camps, show the "Jesus" film and work in medical clinics. In the past four years, more than 100,000 decisions have been made for Christ.

Each Tebow family member is involved in the non-denominational evangelistic association. After the 2007 football season ends, Tim's sister, Christy Allen, who is married to Joey Allen and is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, will go with Joey and their 11-month old daughter, Claire, to Bangladesh to be missionaries.

Another Tebow daughter, Katie Shepherd, is married to Gannon Shepherd, who has played in the NFL with Jacksonville, Houston and Cleveland.

Robby Tebow, who played football at Carson-Newman, is the North Florida Fellowship of Christian Athletes director. Peter Tebow is a Florida senior.

In 1966, Bob Tebow helped begin Campus Crusade for Christ at Florida, where he graduated. Pam is also a graduate of Florida.

Tim, who is a member of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, is involved with both the FCA and Campus Crusade for Christ. In a state known for its worship-like attitudes toward football, Tebow has rock-star status.

Tebow said that he bases his life on the Solid Rock — Jesus Christ. He was six years old when he asked Christ to be his savior and lord.

"My parents shared the gospel with me and always got me to church. They talked to me about the Lord and spiritual things."

As Tebow listened, the Holy Spirit began working in his life. "I didn't feel comfortable and I told my mom that I want to get saved. I want to know how I can spend eternity in heaven. Right there on the couch, I asked Christ to come into my heart. Since then I'm 100 percent sure I'm going to heaven," said Tebow.

His performance as a freshman only added to his stature. Tebow (6-3, 234) was named Freshman All-American by *The Sporting News*. His eight rushing touchdowns ranked seventh nationally and he gained 469 yards rushing.

"I try to be thankful about them (awards) but not think about them too much. I keep working to get better," said Tebow, aware of the attention he receives.

"In today's society people look up to football players. At Florida you have a platform. You can take that platform and use it for positives or negatives."

Battling distractions requires "staying in the Word (Bible)" and receiving encouragement through "spiritual reminders" from his parents, prayer and attending weekly team chapels and Gainesville churches.

Tebow claims Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

"You get really busy," said Tebow. "You always remind yourself to take time and spend time in prayer and read the Word.

"It's hard to put into words. Jesus means everything. Without him I would be nothing. He is the reason why we are here. We are to honor Him in everything we do and say and be thankful for Him. He has given me athletic ability. On the field and off the field, I give all praise, honor and glory to Him. He gave me the athletic ability and he can easily take it away."

Tebow is aware of the athletic ability of his teammates. "Not a lot of quarterbacks in college football have the athletes I have to work with. There are five or six guys that can catch the ball and take it to the house," he said.

Florida wide receiver Andre Caldwell said, "We're coming together well and we're bonding, getting our timing down. (Tebow) is showing the guys a strong arm and he's getting me the ball and letting me make plays with it. He's got one of the strongest arms I've seen."

Football does rank number one on Tebow's list of passions. Weightlifting is a close second.

Florida offensive coordinator Dan Mullen says that Tebow would rather stay in the weight room all day than sleep at night.

Florida head coach Urban Meyer was quoted last year as saying, "Tim is an extremist. He doesn't just lift weights. He wants to break the school record in bench press."

Tebow has grown up playing sports. He was home schooled by his parents but under a 1996 bill passed by Florida legislators was allowed to play high school sports at a public high school.

In 2006 he was a *Parade* All-American and led Allen D. Nease High School of St. Augustine, Fla., to the Class 4A state championship, its first-ever.

Tebow set the state prep record for total offense (12,960 yards), career passing yards (9,940), touchdowns (159) and completed passes (631). He has single-season state records in total offense (5,552), passing yards (4,286), touchdown passes (46) and total touchdowns (70).

Each of Tebow's brothers and sisters were also home-schooled.

"More important than just learning how to read and write, it was more important to teach character which is what life is truly about," he said.

Tebow inspired the "Tim Tebow Bill," introduced in the state of Alabama, that would allow home schoolers to play athletics at public schools.

When Florida won the 1996 national championship, it was quarterbacked by Heisman Trophy winner Danny Wuerffel. Tebow and Wuerffel, a devout Christian, are friends.

"He's really supportive of me. I'm appreciative of that. I look up to him a whole lot," said Tebow.

With the national championship legacy that Wuerffel began, Tebow hopes to continue. He accepts the pressure.

"I like being at the University of Florida. Every game there's going to be pressure."

Meyer, who was named the 2006 National Coach of the Year, bragged on Tebow.

"The thing that makes him different than any player I've been around is his drive, his toughness, his competitiveness. Tim wakes up every morning and tries to get better at his job."

Tebow said that goes back to his work ethic and determination. "You learn a lot about yourself."

He's also learned that God is with him daily. That fact has Tebow loving life.

"You are trying to do everything you can to honor the Lord and your family name," said Tebow. "I am living for Christ and loving Him." ■

Photo By: Doug Benc/Getty Images

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PHOTO BY WESLEY HITT/GETTY IMAGES

McFadden: Legendary Speed, Strength and Stiff-Arm

By Nate Allen

Growing up in Little Rock in the 1960s and '70s, first as a Razorback fan and then a Razorback ballboy, Houston Nutt saw firsthand such great University of Arkansas running backs as Bill Burnett, Dickey Morton and Ike Forte.

As an Arkansas backup quarterback, he played with running backs Ben Cowins and Jerry Eckwood, two others who rank with the school's all-time best.

Later as the Razorbacks' head coach, Nutt supervised running back greats Madre Hill, Fred Talley and Cedric Cobbs.

None of the above ranks with the back Nutt coaches now: Darren McFadden, the 2006 Doak Walker Award winner and Heisman Trophy runner-up.

"He has a lot of the same qualities," Nutt said, "as a lot of the backs you mentioned. What sets him apart is he's *so strong* and *so fast*."

Unbelievably strong and fast, to the chagrin of those he's run past, around and over.

That jolting stiff arm of his seems to cross area codes.

"That combination of 6-3, 215, legitimate 4.3 speed, and stiff-arm with a long, long arm ... a lot of guys fall off of him," Nutt said.

Nutt was just getting warmed up. Because when he was an assistant for Pat Jones at Oklahoma State, Nutt saw Barry Sanders and Thurman Thomas, two running backs who became among the NFL's all-time best.

"I really put him in that category," Nutt said of his junior from Little Rock. "The attitude ... the unselfishness ... those are great players. I know they are Hall of Famers, but you've got to put him in that category."

Sanders and Thomas saved their best for the best. So does McFadden, Nutt said.

"The ability since he's been a freshman to break 80 yards against the likes of Georgia and Alabama ... it's no fluke. It's been consistent."

And he delivers consistent results from enough positions to drive a defensive coordinator crazy.

"He'll take a kickoff back for a touchdown," Nutt said. "Go catch a ball, line up as a quarterback. The thing that really sets him apart is his versatility. Kickoff return, quarterback, wideout, tailback."

The quarterbacking McFadden did out of Arkansas' special Wildcat formation last year netted him major fame and Arkansas major results; he completed seven of nine passes with three touchdowns and one interception.

He even practiced returning punts in the spring.

"I think he could do it," Nutt said, then shuddered at the injury risk. "I worry about it. He sure wants to do it."

McFadden sure wants to do more of everything than he did in the spring.

Fellow junior running back Felix Jones, also a 1,000-yard rushing star, and McFadden spent the spring like they were wrapped in tissue paper. The chess team might have had more contact than the All-Americans because Nutt determined they would come through spring ball unscathed.

Neither liked it.

"I understand what he's doing," McFadden said, "but it's like I'm just a little feather standing over there. Me and Felix, we both stand over there watching and go, 'Like man, he needs to let us get in a couple of plays, especially when the offense is not doing well.' "

Better, Nutt said, that McFadden and Jones be watching a struggling spring scrimmage than watching the season-opener against Troy because they tore something in the spring.

Even the hype to attract fans to the stands for the Razorbacks' Red-White spring game came with a disclaimer.

"We want it exciting where the people can

enjoy it," Nutt said, "but if they are expecting Darren McFadden to be tackled or Felix Jones to have live scrimmage work, that's not going to happen."

Of course Nutt took pretty strict precautions in the spring of 2006 with McFadden, and it did no good. On the last weekend before August preseason drills, McFadden went home for the weekend. He was hanging around the outside of a Little Rock nightclub when he saw someone trying to drive his brother's car.

A fight ensued. McFadden's shoe flew off during a missed kick that ended with his bare toe thudding into a curb.

McFadden suffered "an open dislocation of the distal IP joint on his left big toe," Arkansas trainer Dean Weber said.

Extensive surgery was performed just hours later.

The injury was seen as possibly career-threatening, certainly season-threatening. At best, the initial hope was for McFadden to return several weeks into the season.

Yet, somehow, he didn't miss a game. Nine carries for 42 yards against Southern California in the opener, and 184 rushing yards the next week against Utah State. When the season ended at the Capital One Bowl, McFadden had amassed a Razorback record 1,647 yards and 14 touchdowns on 284 carries.

Nutt and Weber said they learned a lot about just how tough and determined an athlete could be.

In turn, they hope McFadden learned about where he should and shouldn't be, and what he can and can't do to protect his health.

"I guess if they take a car now," McFadden said, smiling, "I'll let them ride off with it."

He was serious about that joke, but he's a serious joker on this team.

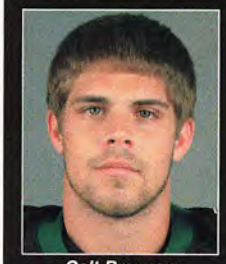
An *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* photographer was startled that the guy in the full clown suit he chanced upon and photographed walking around campus on Halloween turned out to be the All-American running back.

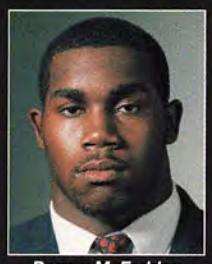
Now McFadden feels compelled to take clowning to another level.

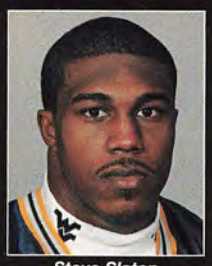
"Whatever I do this year," McFadden said, "I've got to top last year."

Clowning around while accepting the Heisman seems like an acceptable topper.

OFFENSE


Colt Brennan


Darren McFadden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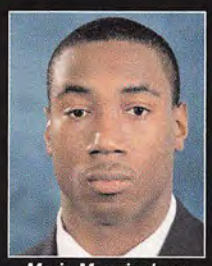
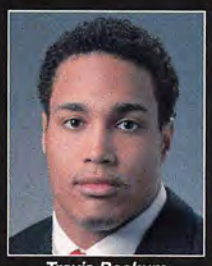
DeSean Jackson


Mario Manningham

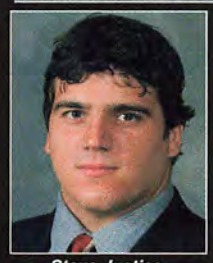

Travis Beckum

FIRST TEAM

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Colt Brennan	6-3	196	Sr.	Hawaii
RB	Darren McFadden	6-2	205	Jr.	Arkansas
RB	Steve Slaton	5-10	190	Jr.	West Virginia
WR	DeSean Jackson	6-0	166	Jr.	Cal
WR	Mario Manningham	6-0	182	Jr.	Michigan
TE	Travis Beckum	6-4	219	Jr.	Wisconsin
C	Steve Justice	6-4	284	Sr.	Wake Forest
OL	Sam Baker	6-5	305	Sr.	USC
OL	Jake Long	6-7	313	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Michael Oher	6-5	325	Jr.	Ole Miss
OL	Barry Richardson	6-7	330	Sr.	Clemson
PK	Art Carmody	5-8	165	Sr.	Louisville

SECOND TEAM

Pos.	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Brian Brohm	6-4	224	Sr.	Louisville
RB	Mike Hart	5-9	196	Sr.	Michigan
RB	Ray Rice	5-9	200	Jr.	Rutgers
WR	Earl Bennett	6-1	202	Jr.	Vanderbilt
WR	Adarius Bowman	6-4	220	Sr.	Oklahoma State
TE	John Carlson	6-6	259	Sr.	Notre Dame
C	Jonathan Luigs	6-4	305	Sr.	Arkansas
OL	Ryan Clady	6-6	319	Jr.	Boise State
OL	Adam Kraus	6-6	297	Sr.	Michigan
OL	Jeremy Perry	6-2	313	Jr.	Oregon State
OL	Andre Smith	6-4	348	So.	Alabama
PK	Alexis Serna	5-8	170	Sr.	Oregon State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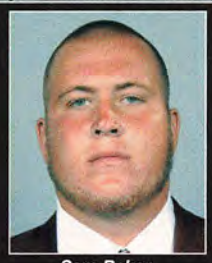
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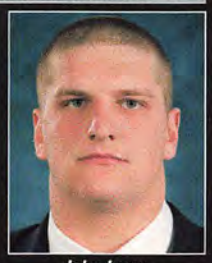

Jake Long

Michael Oher

Barry Richardson

Art Carmody

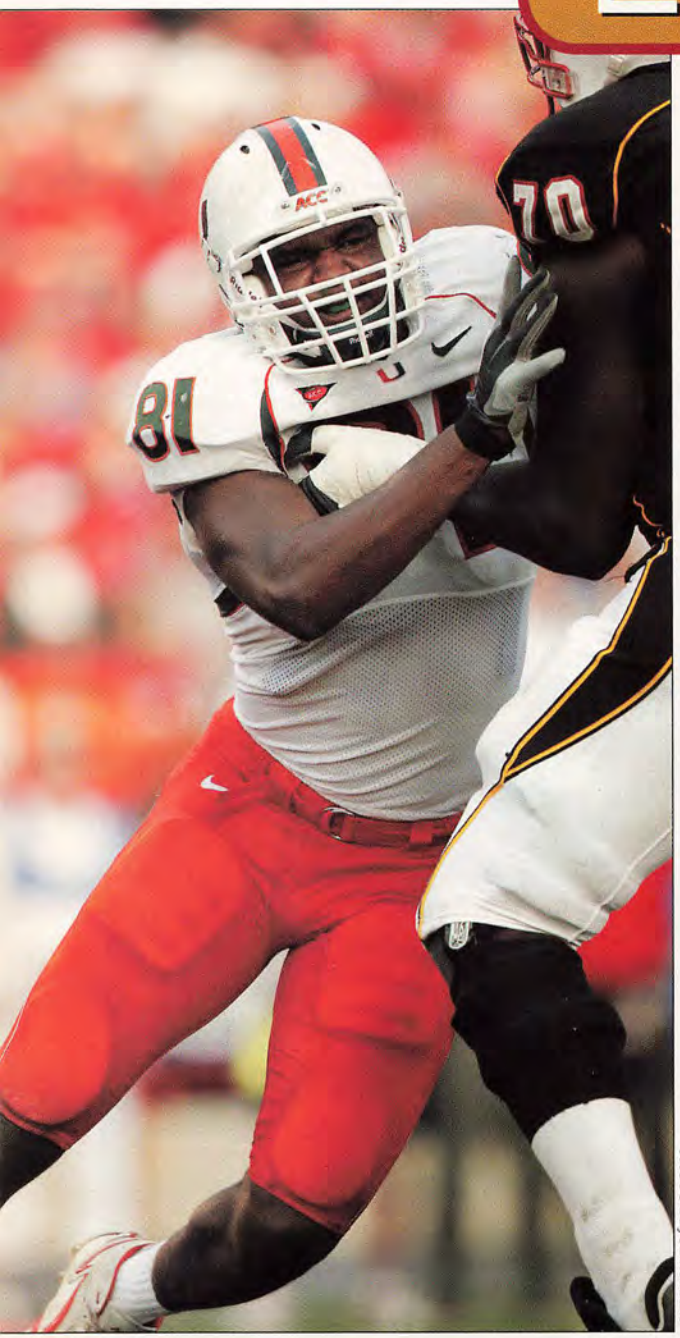


PHOTO BY JOE ROBBINS

Miami's Campbell Anxious to Play Hungrier Than Ever

By Craig Handel

Even though he's gone, Charles Campbell's voice still echoes with son Calais.

Play hungry. You can do better. You're not tired.

Last fall, other voices spoke to and about Campbell, voices that said he was ready to play in the NFL. They saw 10.5 sacks and 20.5 tackles for losses by a 6-8, 282-pound redshirt sophomore defensive end who just was starting to grow into his body.

The voices included scouts.

"They'd say, 'Hey, we'll take 81 right now,'" said Clint Hurtt, Miami's defensive line coach.

Campbell would have had to stuff his ears with cotton not to hear that a hefty contract would be awaiting him if he left early for the 2007 NFL Draft.

"Oh yeah, I definitely heard that," Campbell said. "A lot of people were speaking that. It crossed my mind."

When Campbell made his decision to stay, one voice resonated loudest.

"My dad played a big role," Campbell said. "What would my dad want me to do? My dad would want me to get my degree."

So when Campbell made his choice, he said, "There are no ifs, ands or buts about it."

Charles Campbell died of a liver ailment on Nov. 26, 2003. He was 61.

"I remember how hard he worked," Campbell said. "He wanted me to be the best I could be. I didn't want him to die in vain. So I appreciate every day.

"Before every game, he used to tell me, 'Play hungry.' Every time I had a good game, he'd say, 'Play a little hungrier; you could've made a few more plays.' I hear him over and over again."

Campbell was one of the good-energy guys in last season's disappointing Miami team that went 7-6 and got coach Larry Coker fired. That helped quiet the national buzz on Campbell, who had a streak of seven consecutive games with at least one sack and helped the Hurricanes set a school record by allowing just 67.9 rushing yards per game.

He also had 17 quarterback pressures.

Campbell, with uncommon size, strength and speed, already has proven to be ultra-productive. And his ceiling is higher than any defender in the country, too, which all adds up to make him *Lindy's* Preseason Defensive Player of the Year.

Just think: Coming out of South High in Denver, Campbell could have played basketball. Oregon and Washington offered scholarships. As he watched the Ducks battle eventual national champion Florida in the Midwest Regional final, he thought, "They could've used a guy like me."

Colorado State and Wyoming offered him the chance to play both sports. But Campbell went to Miami for football only.

"If I played basketball, I would not be as good as I am now," Campbell said. "I don't have time to concentrate on both sports. I have to fine tune on one."

He also would not be as big as he is now. Campbell arrived at Miami weighing 228 pounds. Campbell originally was set to try out at tight end and defensive end. When coaches gave him an offensive playbook on his first day of practice, he asked to play defense.

That's where he has stayed.

After his redshirt season, Campbell had 2.5 sacks and 5.5 tackles for losses in 2005. Last year, he broke out with 84 tackles and three forced fumbles, as well as the sacks and tackles-for-loss numbers that rank among the

school's best for a season.

"He's a real long cat," said Miami offensive tackle Cyrim Wimbs, who often goes against Campbell in practice. "He makes most tackles defensive ends can't because he can swim. He really works technique. Calais always brings it."

Adds tackle Reggie Youngblood: "You have to block him and block him some more."

Former Miami center Anthony Wollschlager said Campbell's desire matches his build and athleticism.

"We always talked about the inside, about heart," Wollschlager said. "That's what separates him from other guys. He has the heart, the drive. Combine heart and motivation with the physical abilities he has, and he's hard to stop."

Hurtt said Campbell made plays in '06 on pure ability. The goal now is to make him dominant on every single snap.

"His first step, pad level, hand placement … then, we want him to identify formations and tendencies, make sure his fundamentals are consistent," he said.

Campbell adds he wants to build his stamina and be more of a team leader. Among those he'll be guiding will be brother Jared, a cornerback who Miami signed in February. How will he guide?

"I thought about it a lot," Calais Campbell said. "I want him to have fun and make mistakes on his own like I did. I did my thing, partied hard, then I realized I had to calm down and concentrate on football.

"I'll get on him, ride him, but I also realize, I have to let him do his own thing."

Often seen at Miami games jumping up and down and waving his arms to get Hurricanes' fans louder, Campbell got so excited in his first few games last season, he cramped up.

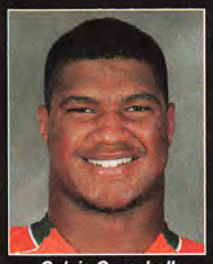
"I had to take IVs at halftime," the fast-talking Campbell said. "I was too hyped up and my body got overloaded by the second half. I had to calm down."

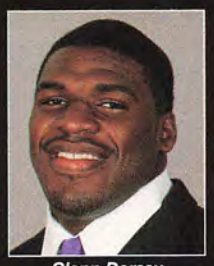
With his emotions more under control, Campbell excelled. He still hears his dad's voice at times, but now his own words push him.

"I tell myself in a game, 'Calais you gotta pick it up, make a play,' " he said. "Hopefully, every game, I'll make a play."

Or several.

DEFENSE


Calais Campbell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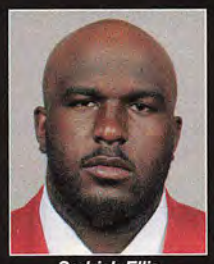
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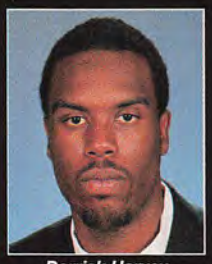
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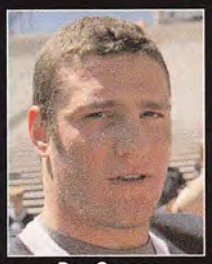
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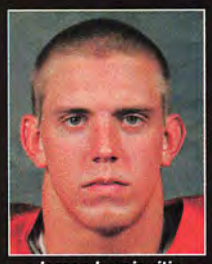
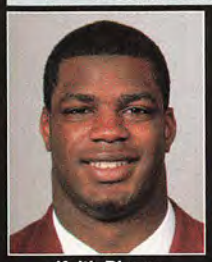

James Laurinaitis

FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Calais Campbell	6-8	282	Jr.	Miami (FL)
DL	Glenn Dorsey	6-2	299	Sr.	LSU
DL	Sedrick Ellis	6-1	295	Sr.	USC
DL	Derrick Harvey	6-4	245	Jr.	Florida
LB	Dan Connor	6-3	233	Sr.	Penn State
LB	James Laurinaitis	6-3	244	Jr.	Ohio State
LB	Keith Rivers	6-3	230	Sr.	USC
DB	Antoine Cason	6-0	185	Sr.	Arizona
DB	Dwight Lowery	6-1	185	Sr.	San Jose State
DB	Kenny Phillips	6-2	202	Jr.	Miami (FL)
DB	Jonathan Hefney	5-9	185	Sr.	Tennessee
P	Durant Brooks	6-0	202	Sr.	Georgia Tech

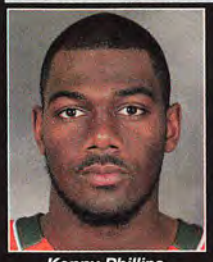
SECOND TEAM

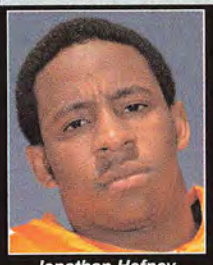
Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Bruce Davis	6-3	237	Sr.	UCLA
DL	Eric Foster	6-2	265	Sr.	Rutgers
DL	Quentin Groves	6-3	254	Sr.	Auburn
DL	Chris Long	6-4	284	Sr.	Virginia
LB	Vince Hall	6-0	240	Sr.	Virginia Tech
LB	Rey Maualuga	6-3	250	Jr.	USC
LB	Jasper Brinkley	6-2	262	Sr.	South Carolina
DB	Brandon Flowers	5-10	190	Jr.	Virginia Tech
DB	Paul Oliver	6-0	201	Sr.	Georgia
DB	Aqib Talib	6-2	180	Jr.	Kansas
DB	Tom Zbikowski	6-0	210	Sr.	Notre Dame
P	Britton Colquitt	6-3	205	Jr.	Tennessee


Keith Rivers

Antoine Cason

Dwight Lowery


Kenny Phillips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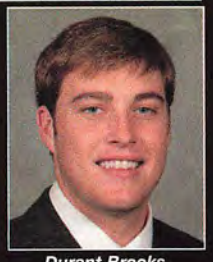
Durant Brooks

PLAYER RATINGS

QUARTERBACKS

Colt Brennan

PHOTO BY DAVID ALLIO/ICON SMI

Brennan: Quite a Product from Quite a System

Product of the system? Of course he's a product of the system. They're all products of their systems, you know.

And who *wouldn't* argue that attempting 559 passes in 14 games owes more to the system than the skills of the quarterback? Certainly Hawaii's Colt Brennan is a product of June Jones' sexy passing attack.

But as he enters his senior season, it ought to be noted that Brennan's skills are what separate him from the fray ... that his story is more than simply "passes all the time, so he puts up gaudy numbers."

His squiggly figures tell a different — or perhaps, additional — story.

First, the numbers: 5,549, 58, 46.9, and 11.

That's his yards passing, his touchdown passes, his team's scoring average, and the Warriors' victories last season.

Now for the details.

He is accurate, uncannily so, completing 72.6 percent against defenses that know he's going to pass. He threw only 12 interceptions and rushed for 366 yards, proving he's nimble in the pocket and not afraid to use his helmet for that extra foot.

Granted, the Western Athletic Conference isn't marketing its defense. But in games against bowl teams Alabama, Boise State, Oregon State, Purdue and Arizona State, Brennan threw 17 touchdown passes and was picked off six times in 220 attempts; a completion rate of 71.8 percent.

Hawaii finished 2-3 in those games, including losses at Alabama and Boise State by a total of 15 points.

Still, the doubters are out there across the mainland. The comparisons to NCAA career all-time passing yardage leader Timmy Chang, and his failures at several NFL stops, hang on Brennan's shoulder pads like a pesky linebacker. Brennan finished a distant sixth in the Heisman Trophy voting in 2006, a victim of his own offense and limited exposure.

By the time Brennan is warming up for his games in the middle of the Pacific, most folks east of the Rockies are fast asleep. They've missed quite a story — of how a freshman quarterback at Colorado made a horribly wrong read off campus that landed him seven days in jail and four years' probation for burglary and trespassing.

He left the beleaguered university in the winter of 2004, spent the following fall at Saddleback Junior College in Mission Viejo, Calif.

It led to a walk-on tryout from Hawaii head coach June Jones, who has a background of offering players second chances. When nobody else was encouraging Brennan, Jones and the coaches at Saddleback were behind him. San Jose State made a late run, and was the only school to offer him a scholarship, but fate took him to paradise, instead.

"Coach Jones gave me a second chance and that's made a huge difference in my life," Brennan said, who opted last January to return for his senior season, much like friend and former Mater Dei High teammate Matt Leinart did at USC.

"People always want to talk about the numbers. But it's not about numbers; it's about winning football games."

If you want to catch the flinty side of Jones, just mention "system" and "Colt Brennan" in the same sentence. Jones believes Brennan would be successful in any passing system.

"But the offense he's in is perfect for him," Jones said. "He makes plays when he has to. Nobody played better than him last year."

And somebody else is going to have to be totally off the charts to play better than him this year, too.

— Paul Arnett

TOP QUARTERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Colt Brennan**	Sr.	Hawaii
	He'll be on national TV at least four times; check him out.		
2.	**Brian Brohm**	Sr.	Louisville
	Best senior QB prospect wanted a title before heading off to NFL.		
3.	**John David Booty**	Sr.	USC
	USC added some shotgun in spring; maybe no more passes batted down.		
4.	**Colt McCoy**	So.	Texas
	Still has loads of weapons after 29 touchdown passes as a freshman.		
5.	**Pat White**	Jr.	West Virginia
	Most dangerous QB in the country when he tucks the ball and runs.		
6.	**Chad Henne**	Sr.	Michigan
	Should become school's career passing leader, but will he beat OSU?		
7.	**Matt Ryan**	Sr.	Boston College
	First-team All-ACC with 2,942 passing yards while playing hurt.		
8.	**Erik Ainge**	Sr.	Tennessee
	Some no-huddle offense could add to his effectiveness.		
9.	**Andre Woodson**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Remarkable transformation last year, with 31-to-7 TD-INT ratio.		
10.	**Tim Tebow**	So.	Florida
	A better Heiman candidate than a quarterback at this point.		
11.	**Chase Daniel**	Jr.	Missouri
	A record-setter running the Tigers' shotgun-spread offense.		
12.	**Matt Grothe**	So.	South Florida
	Passed for 2,576 yards and was team's leading rusher as well.		
13.	**Stephen McGee**	Jr.	Texas A&M
	Brings a linebacker's mentality to the position; doesn't make mistakes.		
14.	**Brian Johnson**	Jr.	Utah
	Pass-run threat looked A-OK in the spring coming back from '05 ACL.		
15.	**Rudy Carpenter**	Jr.	Arizona State
	Watch him soar after quietly playing through injuries last season.		
16.	**Paul Smith**	Sr.	Tulsa
	Third-year starter gets to play in Gus Malzahn's passing offense.		
17.	**Curtis Painter**	Sr.	Purdue
	Has to cut way back on INTs (19), but otherwise has Brees-like numbers.		
18.	**Bobby Reid**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	A dual-threat QB who finished with 500 yards and five rushing TDs.		
19.	**Riley Skinner**	So.	Wake Forest
	All he did was help Wake Forest to ACC title as a freshman.		
20.	**Nate Longshore**	Jr.	Cal
	Should be over big-game jitters of last season, gets big games at home.		
21.	**Josh Freeman**	So.	Kansas State
	The bar has been set with comparisons to ex-LSU QB JaMarcus Russell.		
22.	**Brandon Cox**	Sr.	Auburn
	Muddled his way through injury-plagued 2006 season.		
23.	**John Parker Wilson**	Jr.	Alabma
	With new offense should break Tide passing record he set last year.		
24.	**Justin Willis**	So.	SMU
	C-USA Freshman of Year passed for 26 TDs with a mere six INTs.		
25.	**Juice Williams**	So.	Illinois
	Optimism in Illini-land because of Juice and frosh WR Arrelious Benn.		

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PLAYER RATINGS

RUNNING BACKS

RAY RICE

PHOTO BY BRUCE SCHWARTZMAN

Rice Looking for Heisman Photo-op Redux

Tucked away in a drawer in Ray Rice's home in New Rochelle, N.Y., is a picture of him standing next to the Heisman Trophy along with former USC quarterback Matt Leinart.

The photo is from 2004, when Rice, then a high school senior, was one of a dozen or so New York City-area prep football players who were honored at a Heisman breakfast.

Leinart, who had won the award two days earlier, stopped by to speak to the group.

"It's just me, Matt Leinart and the Heisman Trophy," Rice said.

Leinart is out of the picture now. But Rice, Rutgers' star running back, could be headed for another Heisman photo-op if he can build off his record-breaking sophomore season from last fall, when he rushed for 1,794 yards and 20 touchdowns.

That's when his name first crept into Heisman conversation. He finished seventh in the balloting.

"It's pretty remarkable that I was a candidate last year," said the 5-9, 200-pound Rice. "It's not something I ever really thought about until people started asking me."

They started asking because Rice set a school single-season rushing record in leading Rutgers (yes, Rutgers) to an 11-2 season, the program's first bowl victory and a No. 12 final ranking.

Along the way he tied a school record with seven straight games of 100 or more rushing yards, topped the 200-yard mark three times, and was named Most Outstanding Player of the Texas Bowl. He also earned second-team All-American honors.

Not that any of it was entirely unexpected, since Rice rushed for 1,120 yards as a true freshman.

"All along I've said he's a special back," Rutgers coach Greg Schiano said.

"Ray's three best traits are his vision, patience and balance. He's fast and strong, but there are a lot of fast, strong guys out there. He has a way of waiting until something opens up and then accelerating immediately."

Another of his strengths is, well, his strength. And durability. Rice, who said he never carried more than 120 times in a high school season, set a school record with 335 carries last year.

More impressive to Schiano is that he averaged 5.4 yards during those 335 carries.

"Sometimes I feel it after the game, but I never get tired during the game," said Rice. "The longer the game goes, the stronger I get. I can't explain it."

Evidence: Rice averaged 5.9 yards on his carries in the fourth quarter and overtime (483 yards on 81 carries).

"Nothing he does surprises me any more," said Jeremy Zuttah, the Scarlet Knights' All-Big East offensive tackle.

Rutgers, which hadn't been to a bowl game since 1978 prior to Rice's arrival, has now been to two straight with him as the starting tailback — and only missed out on a BCS berth last fall because of a triple-overtime loss at West Virginia in the final game of the regular season.

But Rice easily could have been doing all of this for another Big East school — Syracuse — if the football fates hadn't intervened on Rutgers' behalf.

He had committed to the 'Cuse before the school fired long-time coach Paul Pasqualoni. Rice re-opened his recruiting and Rutgers pursued him aggressively.

"Things work out for a reason," he said. "Being at Rutgers is the best thing that could have happened to me."

No one at Rutgers will argue the point.

— Tom Luicci

TOP RUNNING BACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Darren McFadden**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Nobody can do it like he can — running, receiving, passing, returning.		
2.	**Steve Slaton**	Jr.	West Virginia
	Slaton slithered for silky seven yards per carry last season.		
3.	**Ray Rice**	Jr.	Rutgers
	Tough, Big East back who can be a thoroughbred and a workhorse.		
4.	**Mike Hart**	Sr.	Michigan
	Not the flashiest guy, but not many can handle the workload he can.		
5.	**Ian Johnson**	Jr.	Boise State
	Everybody's darling knows how to find paydirt — 25 TDs last season.		
6.	**Yvenson Bernard**	Sr.	Oregon State
	Still too far under radar? Has 2,648 rushing yards, 27 career touchdowns.		
7.	**Chris Wells**	So.	Ohio State
	This high because of his potential to take over as Buckeyes' focus.		
8.	**P.J. Hill**	So.	Wisconsin
	Powered his way to 1,569 yards and Big Ten rushing title as freshman.		
9.	**Tashard Choice**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	Through-the-tackles runner (1,473 yards) is now Tech's offensive star.		
10.	**Branden Ore**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	Hokies won't go far without him; rushed for 16 TDs last year.		
11.	**James Davis**	Jr.	Clemson
	Said to have improved his speed after season with 1,187 yards, 17 TDs.		
12.	**Jamaal Charles**	Jr.	Texas
	With sprinter's speed, capable of so much more than 831 yards from '06.		
13.	**BenJarvus Green-Ellis**	Sr.	Ole Miss
	School found "missing" yard in offseason to give him exactly 1,000.		
14.	**Felix Jones**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Had 1,168 yards — 7.6 per attempt — as a backup to McFadden..		
15.	**Jonathan Stewart**	Jr.	Oregon
	Will now be featured every which way in Oregon's spread offense.		
16.	**Antone Smith**	Jr.	Florida State
	Had super spring; new coordinator might finally spark FSU run game.		
17.	**C.J. Spiller**	So.	Clemson
	As explosive as anyone but will he get the touches? Nearly left for Florida.		
18.	**Tyrell Sutton**	Jr.	Northwestern
	Still rushed for 1,000 yards as offense slumped around him last season.		
19.	**Ryan Torain**	Sr.	Arizona State
	Dennis Erickson wants a physical running game ... Torain provides it.		
20.	**Mike Goodson**	So.	Texas A&M
	Big 12 Freshman of the Year is speed option to Jorvorski Lane.		
21.	**Allen Patrick**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Worthy successor to Adrian Peterson could move much higher.		
22.	**Javorris James**	So.	Miami
	Has the bloodlines (Edgerrin's cousin) and is an emerging 'Canes star.		
23.	**Kregg Lumpkin**	Sr.	Georgia
	Showed late last season that he's finally over ACL injury.		
24.	**Kalvin McRae**	Sr.	Ohio
	Lindy's preseason pick for MAC Most Valuable Player.		
25.	**Chris Markey**	Sr.	UCLA
	Rushed for 1,107 yards in '06; missed spring and work in new offense.		

PLAYER RATINGS

RECEIVERS

PHOTO BY DOUG HOLLMAN

LIMAS SWEED

Sweed Attracts Pressure ... and Touchdowns

Four Januaries ago, before the start of his redshirt freshman season at Texas, receiver Limas Sweed made a curious fashion decision.

Out was the No. 11 he'd worn during his year on the Longhorns scout team. In was the No. 4 vacated by All-American wideout Roy Williams.

Seeing as Sweed was a freshman and Williams was the seventh player selected in the NFL Draft ... well, the move immediately opened Sweed to ridicule.

"Everyone laughed at him about wearing that number," coach Mack Brown said. Today, Sweed is the one who is laughing.

In three seasons, Sweed has blossomed into everything Williams used to be for the Longhorns — a big, tall, go-to receiver, a game-breaker, and a frequent contributor to the team's weekly highlight reel.

He is, in Brown's words, "a difference-maker every week."

As a junior last season, Sweed caught a team-best 46 passes for 801 yards, developing into a steady security blanket for freshman quarterback Colt McCoy. Meanwhile, Sweed's 12 touchdown receptions matched a school single-season record set by — who else? — Williams, now a star with the Detroit Lions.

For Sweed, the record was the cherry on top of a breakthrough season in which he emerged as one of the top pass-catchers in the Big 12.

"Growing up, out of all the guys in college football, I watched Roy Williams," said Sweed, who measures in at a Williams-like 6-5, 219 pounds. "He fascinated me, every game. I always wanted to do what Roy was doing, always wanted to emulate him."

Sweed's be-like-Roy campaign got off to a rocky start.

In high school, Sweed played tight end in a run-heavy, Wing-T offense. He arrived at Texas unable to run a proper pass route, or even line up in a proper receiver's stance.

"We always made fun of him," recalls fellow receiver Billy Pittman.

Many a day as a freshman, he left the practice field humiliated. Forget being the next Roy Williams. There were times when Sweed wondered if he'd ever be a productive college receiver at all.

When Sweed posted just 23 catches for 263 yards and no TDs as a freshman, critics were quick to slap the rarest of labels on him: He was deemed a Mack Brown recruiting bust.

"I felt like I was in over my head," Sweed said. "I got angry at times. I was just really, really lost."

Then came the second game of his sophomore season, when Sweed finally found himself. With 2:37 to go in Texas' monumental showdown at Ohio State in 2005, Sweed made a leaping, stretching, falling-down grab of a Vince Young pop fly to score the winning touchdown in the Longhorns' 25-22 upset victory.

"Everything just fell into place for me after that," Sweed said. "Thank God."

He finished his sophomore season as the Longhorns' top wideout, notching 36 catches for 545 yards and five TDs, several of them coming with a degree of difficulty that would have made Williams proud.

That was nothing compared to what Sweed produced as a junior.

"I wanted to make a statement," Sweed said. "I wanted to show everyone that I was for real, that I could be a player."

It's the same attitude Sweed will carry into his senior season.

He's intent on surpassing his numbers from last year, even his record-matching TD total.

This time, nobody is laughing at him.

— Jeff McDonald

TOP RECEIVERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Mario Manningham**	Jr.	Michigan
	Averaging 22 yards per catch through six games before knee injury.		
2.	**DeSean Jackson**	Jr.	Cal
	He's not a skyscraper, but he's like Reggie Bush as a full-time wideout.		
3.	**Earl Bennett**	Jr.	Vanderbilt
	Torrid two years puts him just 48 catches away from SEC career mark.		
4.	**Adarius Bowman**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Returning all-league player had 14 catches, 300 yards, 4 TDs vs. Kansas.		
5.	**Limas Sweed**	Sr.	Texas
	Ever-improving leader of deep WRs corps; All-Big 12 last season.		
6.	**Jarrett Dillard**	Sr.	Rice
	Some All-American honors in '06; 91 catches, 1,247 yards, 21 TDs.		
7.	**Greg Carr**	Jr.	Florida State
	If he learns to run better routes, he could be the next Calvin Johnson.		
8.	**Harry Douglas**	Sr.	Louisville
	Last seen catching 10 passes for 165 yards in the Orange Bowl.		
9.	**Davone Bess**	Jr.	Hawaii
	Zipped around the field for 96 receptions, including 15 TDs last season.		
10.	**Derek Kinder**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
	All-Big East and semifinalist for last season's Biletnikoff Award.		
11.	**Mario Urrutia**	Jr.	Louisville
	Height (6-6) makes him better NFL prospect than teammate Douglas.		
12.	**Marcus Monk**	Sr.	Arkansas
	6-6 touchdown-maker is unstoppable in a crowd of DBs.		
13.	**Early Doucet**	Sr.	LSU
	Speedster becomes the go-to guy for new Tigers quarterback.		
14.	**Keenan Burton**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Amazing 43.5-inch vertical; 77 catches, 1,036 yards, 12 TDs in 2006.		
15.	**DJ Hall**	Sr.	Alabama
	Tide will pass more, putting Hall's own season record (1,056 yards) in danger.		
16.	**Percy Harvin**	So.	Florida
	Only a couple on this list might have more raw, athletic skills.		
17.	**Dorien Bryant**	Sr.	Purdue
	5-10 and shifty, he led Big Ten in catches (87) and receiving yards (1,068).		
18.	**Malcolm Kelly**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Ten touchdown catches a year ago; who gets him the ball this year?		
19.	**James Hardy**	Jr.	Indiana
	Tall target (6-7) for Kellen Lewis; 10 TD catches in each of first two years.		
20.	**Sammie Stroughter**	Sr.	Oregon State
	Go-to guy for new QB Sean Canfield; led Pac-10 with 92.4 yards per game.		

TOP TIGHT ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Travis Beckum**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	Super athlete breaking in new QB after catching 61 passes for 903 yards.		
2.	**John Carlson**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Is the safety valve needed for a new Notre Dame quarterback.		
3.	**Martin Rucker**	Sr.	Missouri
	Most prolific TE in Mizzou history (119 catches), but might not be for long.		
4.	**Chase Coffman**	Jr.	Missouri
	Caught 58 passes and nine TDs last season as "backup" to Rucker.		
5.	**Jacob Tamme**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Earned first-team All-SEC honors with 32 catches, 386 yards.		

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PLAYER RATINGS

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

Baker's Goals are both Simple and Lofty for USC

SAM BAKER

PHOTO BY JOHN PYLE/ICON SMI

TOP CENTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Steve Justice**	Sr.	**Wake Forest**
	All-ACC in 2006; athleticism works well in misdirection offense.		
2.	**Jonathan Luigs**	Sr.	**Arkansas**
	All-SEC performer who helps make McFadden and Jones look good.		
3.	**Cody Wallace**	Sr.	**Texas A&M**
	Aggie mainstay is the top returning lineman in the entire Big 12.		
4.	**John Sullivan**	Sr.	**Notre Dame**
	Fifth-year player will be only senior on Irish's offensive line.		
5.	**Kory Lichtensteiger**	Sr.	**Bowling Green**
	MAC D-lineman tired of seeing this three-time all-league performer.		
6.	**Drew Miller**	Sr.	**Florida**
	Moving to center after earning honors at right guard for national champs.		
7.	**Alex Mack**	Jr.	**Cal**
	Was first-team All-Pac-10 last year for league's most prolific offense.		
8.	**Antoine Caldwell**	Jr.	**Alabama**
	Second-team All-SEC last year; part of experienced O-line for Nick Saban.		

TOP GUARDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jeremy Perry**	Jr.	**Oregon State**
	If he stays, he'll probably be a three-time all-conference player with ease.		
2.	**Adam Kraus**	Sr.	**Michigan**
	First-team All-Big Ten a year ago, as selected by the league coaches.		
3.	**Will Arnold**	Sr.	**LSU**
	Eager for more after missing the majority of last season due to injuries.		
4.	**Jordan Grimes**	Sr.	**Purdue**
	Helped Purdue lead nation in fewest tackles for loss allowed.		
5.	**George Robinson**	Jr.	**Oklahoma**
	The 330-pounder is already rising fast on NFL draft boards.		
6.	**Andrew Crummey**	Sr.	**Maryland**
	Helped Terps allow just 19 sacks, second lowest total in ACC.		
7.	**Chilo Rachal**	Jr.	**USC**
	Unsung all-conference talent on team full of stars.		
8.	**Shannon Tevaga**	Sr.	**UCLA**
	Started 31 consecutive games and leads an experienced line.		

TOP TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jake Long**	Sr.	**Michigan**
	Came back, despite being told he would be a first-round pick in 2007.		
2.	**Sam Baker**	Sr.	**USC**
	Aiming for third consecutive All-American honors.		
3.	**Michael Oher**	Jr.	**Ole Miss**
	Has as much physical presence as any player in the country.		
4.	**Barry Richardson**	Sr.	**Clemson**
	Stalwart on Tigers' line can play his way into first round of NFL draft.		
5.	**Ryan Clady**	Jr.	**Boise State**
	As we know, nothing mid-major about Boise. NFL can't wait to get him.		
6.	**Andre Smith**	So.	**Alabama**
	Mike Shula's star recruit of 2006 lived up to hype as a true freshman.		
7.	**George Bussey**	Sr.	**Louisville**
	He and center Eric Wood help make Louisville's Top 5 offense possible.		
8.	**Kirk Barton**	Sr.	**Ohio State**
	Could be Buckeyes' first first-round OT since Orlando Pace in 1997.		

Already a two-time All-American, USC offensive tackle Sam Baker might seem hard-pressed for an encore this season. But Baker's dream season starts off with a simple goal: Stay healthy.

As improbable as it sounds, Baker was an All-American last season despite being bothered by a knee injury he originally suffered two years ago. He played with a large piece of loose bone in his knee.

"It affected a lot of stuff I did," Baker said.

Few noticed, however, and Baker was a consensus All-American. He easily could have turned pro, but he never considered it despite being perhaps the top prospect on last year's USC team.

"A lot of people might think I would go pro, but I just want to win a national championship," Baker said in the spring.

"My biggest thing this year is to just fix up my knee. Even now it bothers me after the surgery. It was a really big piece of bone. It's still swollen. How much it hurts depends on what week."

A player of Baker's caliber would usually be inundated with phone calls from agents advising him to go pro early. But Baker said he didn't get many calls because his father, Arena Football League commissioner David Baker, put the word out he was coming back for his senior season.

"There's so much he does well, it's just real smooth and consistent watching him," USC offensive line coach Pat Ruel said. "He's been a rock for us on the line the past two seasons and will be again next year."

Soft-spoken by nature, Baker is often misunderstood because few see how competitive he really is. When USC lost to Texas in the national championship game at the end of the 2005 season, Baker showed up at his father's house in the middle of the night and vowed to win another title.

The Trojans fell just short last season, although they defeated Michigan in the Rose Bowl. Baker feels the chances are better this season.

"I really think so far this is one of the best teams since I've been here," Baker said. "Last year we didn't know for sure how our quarterback would be, but this year we've got an established quarterback in John David (Booty); we know he's the guy. And most of our defense comes back, so we're going to be even better there."

Baker graduated in May, so he already has a degree. His graduation ceremony was one of the highlights of his year, but it caused him to be late to the Playboy All-American team festivities in Arizona.

"It's really a cool thing to get that recognition," Baker said. "It's a really hectic weekend, but it's a lot of fun."

Baker's also got a chance to make history. Despite all the vaunted linemen who played for USC, like Bruce Matthews, Tony Boselli, Anthony Munoz, and Brad Budde, Baker is in position to become the first offensive lineman to be a three-time All-American in USC history.

"I didn't know that, but I don't really like to think about that stuff," Baker said. "I just enjoy the team being successful and winning.

"I know I want to get another championship. I remember how special that feels and I'd like to experience it one more time."

— Scott Wolf

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

DERRICK HARVEY

PHOTO BY TODD KIRKLAND/ICON SMI

Doesn't Say Much, but Harvey Doesn't Have To

Florida's Derrick Harvey tore Ohio State's offensive line apart in the BCS National Championship Game.

He had three sacks and earned Defensive MVP honors in the Gators' 41-14 rout of the favored Buckeyes, yet in the postgame interview session, the 6-4, 245-pound redshirt junior defensive end said barely three sentences.

After another one-sentence, 10-second, monotone answer, UF coach Urban Meyer finally had enough.

"Come on, Harv," Meyer urged. "Let it go."

That got a smile out of Harvey, but it didn't make his answers any longer. As loud as his play is on the field — he was second in the Southeastern Conference with 11 sacks — he is practically mute once he takes off his pads.

"When he's comfortable around people, he'll talk more," co-defensive coordinator Charlie Strong said. "(Wide receiver Cornelius Ingram) is his best friend, so he's probably the guy he talks to more than anyone."

Harvey started his football career with a one-word answer.

Rich Houchens, the football coach at Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, Md., first spotted Derrick Harvey in 2002 on the basketball court. Houchens watched the 6-2, 185-pounder grab a rebound and dunk, and the football coach got excited. Then Houchens watched Harvey use a chest bump to shove a player who had taunted him, and he got even more excited.

"The kid went flying," Houchens said. "Then I saw the look in (Harvey's) eyes. It hit another switch. I'm like, 'Oh, he's nasty, too. He's got an aggressive side.'"

After the game, Houchens rushed over to Harvey.

"Come play football," he said.

"OK," Harvey replied.

Harvey quickly became a starter at tight end and defensive end as a junior and burst onto the national scene in the first game of his senior season against neighboring Severna Park High School.

"He had a coming-out party," Houchens remembered. "He had four, maybe five sacks, and I don't know how the quarterback survived it. It looked like (Michael) Strahan coming off the edge. He just came off the edge so quick. His first step was so quick and explosive."

Harvey racked up 31 sacks as a senior and ended up being rated as one of the top five recruits by several recruiting services. Harvey arrived in Gainesville in 2004 and needed a redshirt year to adjust to the speed of the game while he gained weight and strength.

"I needed to learn, to get better," Harvey said. "Everybody helped me out a lot. The (defensive) linemen. The OL, too."

Harvey had six tackles and one sack as a redshirt freshman in 2005, and he started last season slowly. He exploded in UF's fourth game against Kentucky, beginning a stretch in which he had at least one sack in six consecutive games.

Don't just chalk that up to the fact he was playing opposite Jarvis Moss, a first-round NFL draft pick who had 7.5 sacks last season. The defensive staff contends Harvey could turn into one of the best defensive ends in school history.

"He's not a real big kid. He's 245 pounds, and he's playing 300-pound offensive tackles and he's held his own in there," co-defensive coordinator Greg Mattison said.

"He's really given us a bonus against the run. ... I don't think you can label him as a pass rusher. He can play all of it."

TOP DEFENSIVE TACKLES

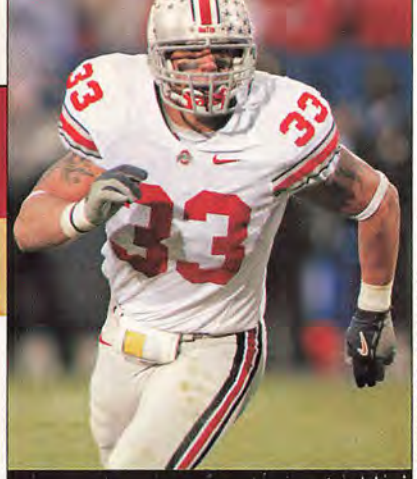
RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Glenn Dorsey**	Sr.	LSU
	Without his return, LSU wouldn't be No. 2 in *Lindy's* preseason rankings.		
2.	**Sedrick Ellis**	Sr.	USC
	When big guy decided to come back, so did DE Lawrence Jackson.		
3.	**Eric Foster**	Sr.	Rutgers
	Good-motor player whose speed, at 265 pounds, is devastating.		
4.	**Andre Fluellen**	Sr.	Florida State
	Top-notch run-stuffer with 16 career tackles for loss.		
5.	**B.J. Raji**	Sr.	Boston College
	An immovable 340-pounder whom ACC coaches rave about.		
6.	**Frank Okam**	Sr.	Texas
	Numbers don't tell the whole story as the NFL loves this guy.		
7.	**Keilen Dykes**	Sr.	West Virginia
	31-game starter was first-team All-Big East last season.		
8.	**Mitch King**	Jr.	Iowa
	Not heavy (264 pounds) but looks like best interior lineman in Big Ten.		
9.	**James McClinton**	Sr.	Kansas
	More than a gap-plugger, he made 14.5 tackles for loss last season.		
10.	**Terrill Byrd**	Jr.	Cincinnati
	All-Big East as a sophomore after season with 8.5 tackles for loss.		
11.	**Jeff Owens**	Jr.	Georgia
	Had 19 quarterback pressures last season.		
12.	**Nick Hayden**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	300-pounder has plugged away for 26 consecutive starts.		

TOP DEFENSIVE ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Calais Campbell**	Jr.	Miami
	Off-the-charts physically (6-8, 282) and productive, too — 10.5 sacks.		
2.	**Derrick Harvey**	Jr.	Florida
	Made Ohio State look silly with three sacks and a fumble recovery.		
3.	**Quentin Groves**	Sr.	Auburn
	Will also see time at OLB as Auburn tinkers with 3-4 front.		
4.	**Chris Long**	Sr.	Virginia
	Howie's kid knows how to get to the QB, too.		
5.	**Bruce Davis**	Sr.	UCLA
	Pure speed coming off the edge — 12.5 sacks last year.		
6.	**Tommy Blake**	Sr.	TCU
	Star high school RB has used his quicks to get 19 career sacks.		
7.	**Lawrence Jackson**	Sr.	USC
	Down year, sack-wise, in 2006 but has the potential for double-digits.		
8.	**Matthew Shaugnessy**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	Two years after knee surgery, he'll start putting up bigger numbers.		
9.	**Vernon Gholston**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Only returning starter on line will get plenty of blocking attention.		
10.	**Tyson Jackson**	Jr.	LSU
	Nearly 300 pounds at end ... and having no trouble getting to the QB.		
11.	**Wallace Gilberry**	Sr.	Alabama
	One of the centerpieces for defensive-minded head coach Nick Saban.		
12.	**Joe Clermond**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
	Emerged last season as first-year starter with Big East-best 16.5 TFLs.		

PLAYER RATINGS

LINEBACKERS



James Laurinaitis

PHOTO BY CHUCK RYDLEWSKI/ICON SMI

Laurinaitis Uses Unsatisfying Finish to Target Improvement

It's no secret that Ohio State linebacker James Laurinaitis has a famous father, Joe, who wrestles as Animal, one of the Road Warriors, *aka* Legion of Doom.

What's gone unnoticed until now is that Laurinaitis apparently also has a twin brother who plays for the Buckeyes, or at he least did last season.

That's who Laurinaitis must be talking about when he grades the guy who wore the No. 33 jersey, started every game in the middle of the OSU defense and won the Nagurski Award as the nation's best defensive player.

"Best defensive player in college football? I can't really believe that," Laurinaitis said, "because I look at film and there are so many things I think I could have done better. I think, probably, it was a team award and they just decided to give it to me."

It's not as if the Buckeyes were swimming in defensive All-Americans last season. Laurinaitis was it in the season following the loss of nine defensive starters, including luminaries A.J. Hawk, Bobby Carpenter and Anthony Schlegel.

Those three gave OSU what was widely acknowledged as the nation's best trio of linebackers in 2005.

Laurinaitis' production — team-bests of 115 tackles, three forced fumbles and five interceptions, the most by an Ohio State linebacker in 20 years — helped turn what was supposed to be a suspect defense into one of the country's best yet again in 2006.

That earned him considerable attention as a Lombardi, Butkus and Outland candidate this season.

"Obviously, you don't want to disappoint people, but you can't focus on that," Laurinaitis said.

"I'm a firm believer in (the saying), 'We're not going to focus on accomplishments, we're going to focus on improvements.' I love that quote and it's true — you have to focus on the stuff you can get better at, because you're never as good as you think you are."

It's easy for Laurinaitis to take that view because the freshest memories he has are of the Buckeyes allowing 80 points in their final two games of last season.

The 39 points Michigan scored in the regular-season finale don't sting as bad, because OSU won that game. But the 41 Florida put up in the BCS national championship game still haunts the Buckeyes' defense.

"If that doesn't motivate you, I don't know what would," Laurinaitis said. "Ending the year like that doesn't allow anyone to feel great about anything. We each have to do whatever we can to make sure that never happens again."

Laurinaitis had 15 stops against the Gators, so he could point fingers at his teammates. Instead, he targets no shortage of areas in which he can improve in 2007.

"Reading (plays) faster, getting to the quarterback better, being more physical, there's a lot of stuff," he said. "I'm a perfectionist, so I'm going to stick with everything."

Carpenter, a first-round choice of the Dallas Cowboys, thinks Laurinaitis may be short-changing himself with that evaluation.

"The way he's worked, the way he's picked things up ... his stats really speak for themselves," Carpenter said. "He was on a great defense and he was the focal point of that defense. His big plays, most of them, came at crucial times that really turned the tide."

— Jason Steele

For more of Lindy's All-American rankings, visit ***www.lindyssports.com***

TOP INSIDE LINEBACKERS

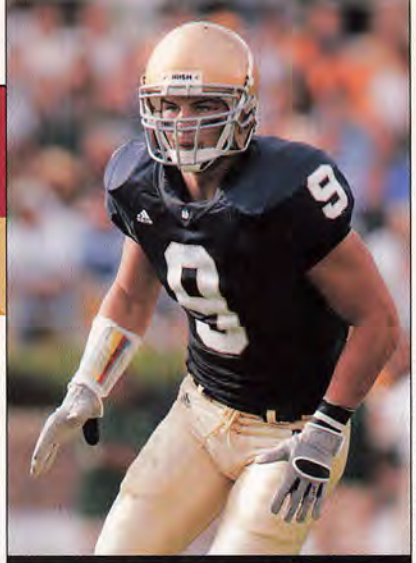
RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**James Laurinaitis**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Wrestler's son won Nagurski Award as first-year starter.		
2.	**Dan Connor**	Sr.	Penn State
	Moving from outside spot and into spotlight vacated by Paul Posluszny.		
3.	**Vince Hall**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
	Surest tackler in the ACC — had 128 of them last season.		
4.	**Rey Maualuga**	Jr.	USC
	Plays with an attitude; promises to curb it off the field.		
5.	**Jasper Brinkley**	Sr.	South Carolina
	Will be flanked this season by his twin brother, Casper (also very good).		
6.	**J Leman**	Sr.	Illinois
	Big Ten's leading tackler missed spring because of ankle surgery.		
7.	**Jonathan Goff**	Sr.	Vanderbilt
	Thought about NFL after being second-team All-SEC as a junior.		
8.	**Philip Wheeler**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	Tremendous playmaker who had 14 tackles for loss, nine sacks last year.		
9.	**Jordon Dizon**	Sr.	Colorado
	Team captain likely will end up in school's top five for career tackles.		
10.	**Mike Klinkenborg**	Sr.	Iowa
	129 tackles last season ...and an academic All-American, to boot.		
11.	**Jerod Mayo**	Jr.	Tennessee
	With 83 tackles, 12.5 for loss, he's the leader of one of SEC's best groups.		
12.	**Prince Hall**	So.	Alabama
	Rising star will be defensive signal-caller in new 3-4 scheme.		

TOP OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Keith Rivers**	Sr.	USC
	He's a senior, so might get more award attention than his junior LB mates.		
2.	**Ali Highsmith**	Sr.	LSU
	Big hitter helps give LSU arguably the top LB crew in the SEC.		
3.	**Alvin Bowen**	Sr.	Iowa State
	National leader last season with 12.9 tackles per game.		
4.	**Erin Henderson**	Jr.	Maryland
	Just keeps making tackles (114 last year), like big brother E.J. did.		
5.	**Wesley Woodyard**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Heart of Kentucky's defense made 122 tackles last year, was All-SEC.		
6.	**Xavier Adibi**	Sr.	Virginia Tech
	Most disruptive and dangerous playmaker for Hokies' top-rated D.		
7.	**Bo Ruud**	Sr.	Nebraska
	All-Big 12 hometown kid once committed to NU nearly two years early.		
8.	**Ian Campbell**	Jr.	Kansas State
	Had 11.5 sacks last year, but moves from DE to OLB in switch to 3-4.		
9.	**Malik Jackson**	Sr.	Louisville
	Playmaker's season highlight: Fumble return for TD vs. West Virginia.		
10.	**Spencer Larsen**	Sr.	Arizona
	Just might be the happiest guy in football; he's always around the ball, too.		
11.	**Brian Cushing**	Jr.	USC
	Physical specimen has to share tackles with Rivers, Maualuga.		
12.	**Marcus Freeman**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Fastest OSU 'backer; strong finish in '06 coming back from knee injury.		

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE BACKS



Tom Zbikowski

PHOTO BY SCOTT BOEHM

Zbikowski Zeroes In for Irish

The apartment has been emptied, the class load considerably lightened, the boxing put on a back shelf. These days, Notre Dame safety Tom Zbikowski has a one-track mind, his focus singularly trained on improving his play on the football field.

The determination is partially born of disappointment.

In 2005, as a junior, Zbikowski seemed to have a homing device for the football and a magnetic attraction to the end zone, coming up with a team-high five interceptions, forcing one fumble, and returning two punts and two interceptions for touchdowns.

He helped preserve a 17-10 victory over Michigan with a key interception. Against Tennessee, he returned both a punt and an interception for touchdowns, made nine tackles and had one sack. He finished the year with 71 tackles, fourth on the team.

In 2006, however, Zbikowski saw his numbers slip — he returned only one kick for a touchdown — and his impact became muted.

Why?

"The reasons why are just all excuses. You've got to just look at it the way it is on film, and just correct it," Zbikowski said. "That's the biggest thing I've been working on with (defensive backs) Coach (Bill) Lewis and Coach (Corwin) Brown, just watching some extra film, not making excuses for why things happen."

So instead of leaving with the rest of his incoming class and throwing his hat into the NFL Draft, Zbikowski chose to return for a fifth year at Notre Dame.

Gone is teammate, roommate and partner-in-crime Jeff Samardzija, the wide receiver/pitcher who started spring in the Cubs' minor league system. Gone is Brady Quinn, the golden-armed quarterback turned Top 10 NFL Draft pick. Gone is secondary mate Chinedum Ndukwe, with whom Zbikowski roamed the backfield for the past two seasons.

What remains is a stripped-down life, one from which Zbikowski has tried to banish any and all distractions.

For one thing, "I've got a lighter load because I was on pace to graduate in three-and-a-half years," Zbikowski said.

As for boxing, Zbikowski, who last summer fought a professional bout at Madison Square Garden in New York, hung up his gloves after a March 6 exhibition charity bout in South Bend.

"I don't think there's any question Tommy did what he did in boxing because … he's reached the point in his athletic career where he's made a decision that this game of football is important to him," Lewis said. "He wants to have the best year he can possibly have. It's really a focusing."

How much room is there for improvement in Zbikowski's game?

"I think that he's capable of raising his level of performance kind of across the board. If I had to point to an area it would be in his playmaking ability versus the passing game," Lewis said. "I really think there's a significant upside to him."

There's upside to the Irish as well, Zbikwoski said.

With the departures of Quinn, Samardzija, right tackle Ryan Harris and defensive end Victor Abiamiri, many are expecting the Irish, after two consecutive trips to Bowl Championship Series games, to suffer a drop-off in 2007.

Zbikowski insists it won't happen.

"We're going to have games like always," Zbikowski said. "Just because we lose a couple of people doesn't mean we can't win."

— Avani Patel

TOP CORNERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Antoine Cason**	Sr.	Arizona
	Taking place along other UA great CBs — Darryll Lewis, Chris McAlister.		
2.	**Dwight Lowery**	Sr.	San Jose State
	Came out of nowhere to pick off nine passes, earn All-American honors.		
3.	**Brandon Flowers**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	Every top-rated defense comes complete with a shut-down corner		
4.	**Aqib Talib**	Jr.	Kansas
	Six INTs and 22 pass break-ups en route to all-conference honors.		
5.	**Paul Oliver**	Sr.	Georgia
	Helped the Dawgs hold Calvin Johnson to only two catches last season.		
6.	**Simeon Castille**	Sr.	Alabama
	Had two two-INT games last season en route to All-SEC honors.		
7.	**Malcolm Jenkins**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Worthy of carrying the banner for Ohio State's great cornerback tradition.		
8.	**Tony Carter**	Jr.	Florida State
	Seminoles' top cover corner in at least several years.		
9.	**Terrell Thomas**	Sr.	USC
	Returned from 2005 injury to make plays all over the field for USC.		
10.	**Jack Ikegwuonu**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	First-team All-Big Ten has height (6-1) and serious recovery speed.		
11.	**DeJuan Tribble**	Sr.	Boston College
	Returned three of his seven interceptions last season for touchdowns.		
12.	**Terrence Wheatley**	Sr.	Colorado
	Was one of only four non-seniors who made first-team All-Big 12.		

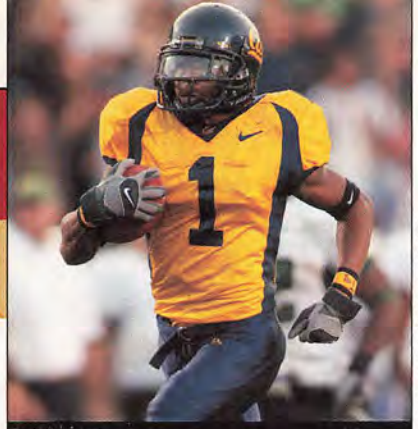
TOP SAFETIES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Kenny Phillips**	Jr.	Miami
	Just needs to stay healthy (unlike last year) to earn top billing.		
2.	**Jonathan Hefney**	Sr.	Tennessee
	Has corner skills, can make the tackle anywhere and is an ace returner.		
3.	**Tom Zbikowski**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Fifth-year senior came back to improve on disappointing junior season.		
4.	**Derek Pegues**	Jr.	Mississippi State
	Moving to safety after having three TDs a year ago — two on punt returns.		
5.	**Chris Horton**	Sr.	UCLA
	Made a team-high 95 tackles in revamped UCLA defense.		
6.	**Josh Barrett**	Sr.	Arizona State
	At 230 pounds, he has been timed as Sun Devils' fastest player.		
7.	**Eric Wicks**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Especially dangerous near the line of scrimmage; seven sacks in '06.		
8.	**Taylor Mays**	So.	USC
	Has great size (6-4, 225) and you know if he's at USC, he isn't slow.		
9.	**Jamal Lewis**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	Took to the position, earning All-ACC honors after moving from corner.		
10.	**Myron Rolle**	So.	Florida State
	Did not disappoint, starting 10 games at rover as true freshman.		
11.	**Anthony Scirrotto**	Sr.	Penn State
	Led the Big Ten with six interceptions, including one vs. Vols in bowl.		
12.	**Quintin Demps**	Jr.	UTEP
	Led C-USA with seven INTs, and is a threat on kick returns.		

PLAYER RATINGS

SPECIAL TEAMS

Cal's Jackson Outruns Coverage on Way to History



DeSean Jackson

PHOTO BY TOM HAUCK/GETTY IMAGES

TOP KICKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Arthur Carmody**	Sr.	Louisville
	Reigning Groza Award winner has never missed beyond 40 yards.		
2.	**Alexis Serna**	Sr.	Oregon State
	2005 Groza winner hit a school-record 58-yard field goal last season.		
3.	**Sam Swank**	Jr.	Wake Forest
	Hit 5 of 7 from beyond 50 last year, and is a heck of a punter, too.		
4.	**Jeremy Ito**	Sr.	Rutgers
	Hits from beyond 50 ... and gets bonus points for being clutch.		
5.	**Garrett Hartley**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Missed once in 20 FG tries last year ... and that was blocked at Oregon.		
6.	**Taylor Mehlhaff**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	Accuracy, range and he led Big Ten kickers in touchbacks last season.		
7.	**Brandon Coutu**	Sr.	Georgia
	Dawgs missed him badly when he sat out seven games with bad hammy.		
8.	**Jeff Wolfert**	Jr.	Missouri
	Missed only twice in 20 field goal attempts, with a long of 54.		

TOP PUNTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Durant Brooks**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	Averaged 45.5 yards per punt last season; had a net 42.0 yards in ACC.		
2.	**Britton Colquitt**	Jr.	Tennessee
	The kicking Colquitt family has another good one (44.9-yard average).		
3.	**Chris Miller**	Jr.	Ball State
	His 46.3-yard average is tops among returning punters.		
4.	**Ken DeBauche**	Sr,	Wisconsin
	Trying to get back to 2005 average of 44.8 yards per attempt.		
5.	**Matt Fodge**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	Second-team All-Big 12 last season behind Baylor's Daniel Sepulveda.		
6.	**Andrew Larson**	Sr.	Cal
	Returning All-Pac-10 punter led league in net average (38.3).		
7.	**Justin Brantly**	Jr.	Texas A&M
	His 44.3-yard average ranked 10th nationally last season.		
8.	**Geoffrey Price**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Averaged 45.4 yards last season; has improved as directional punter.		

TOP ALL-PURPOSE

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**DeSean Jackson**	Jr.	Cal
	Five punt returns for touchdowns in two years ... take that, Reggie Bush.		
2.	**Percy Harvin**	So.	Florida
	Whatever Urban Meyer can think up on offense, Harvin can handle it.		
3.	**Rafael Little**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Missed four games, and still had 1,405 all-purpose yards.		
4.	**C.J. Spiller**	So.	Clemson
	Whatever way he gets the ball, it's a highlight waiting to happen.		
5.	**Damon Nickson**	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
	All-conference safety also returned two kickoffs for touchdowns in '06.		
6.	**Darrell Blackman**	Sr.	N.C. State
	Breakaway threat at WR and on returns, with TDs on a punt and kick.		
7.	**Marcus Thigpen**	Jr.	Indiana
	Good rusher, pass catcher; great on kick returns (three for TDs in 2006).		
8.	**Anthony Alridge**	Sr.	Houston
	Averaged 10.1 yards per carry last year after coming back from injury.		

Standing back there alone — the punt coming at him, the coverage team bearing down and the stadium holding its collective breath — Cal's DeSean Jackson does not think about the gunners, the wall, the seams or the end zone.

"My focus," he said, "is only on catching the ball. Then, after I do that, I let my natural ability take over."

And Jackson might have as much natural ability as any punt returner in college football history.

Consider:

• He leads all active players with five punt return touchdowns, three shy of the NCAA record — and he's only a junior this season.

• He has returned just 26 punts in his career, which means he averages a touchdown nearly *once in every five returns.*

• He was the first-team Associated Press All-American punt returner last season and won the inaugural Randy Moss Award given to the nation's top return man.

"He's the best I've had," said Cal special teams coach Pete Alamar, "and I coached Dennis Northcutt." Northcutt, of the Jacksonville Jaguars, has returned three punts for touchdowns in the NFL.

Jackson, who attended Long Beach Poly High School and chose Cal over USC, is more than a brilliant punt returner. He's also one of the nation's top receivers, a playmaker in the mold of Reggie Bush or Ted Ginn Jr. — someone who can change a game at any moment, from any place on the field.

All Jackson did last year as a wideout was catch 59 passes, average 18 yards a reception and score nine touchdowns. In 24 career games, he has 21 TDs.

Jackson looks like the best player in the Pacific-10 Conference, and, given enough opportunities as a receiver and returner, could make a run at the Heisman Trophy. He certainly won't have much trouble generating highlights.

However dangerous he is as a receiver, the 6-0, 166-pound Jackson is at his breathtaking best as a punt returner. He has first-class speed, the vision to spot seams in the coverage, and the lateral quickness to elude the first wave of tacklers.

Jackson also does a terrific job setting up his blockers. Last season, he fielded a punt against Oregon, took a few steps to his left to lure the coverage in that direction, then quickly cut to his right. With the wall waiting for him, Jackson raced into the end zone for a 65-yard touchdown.

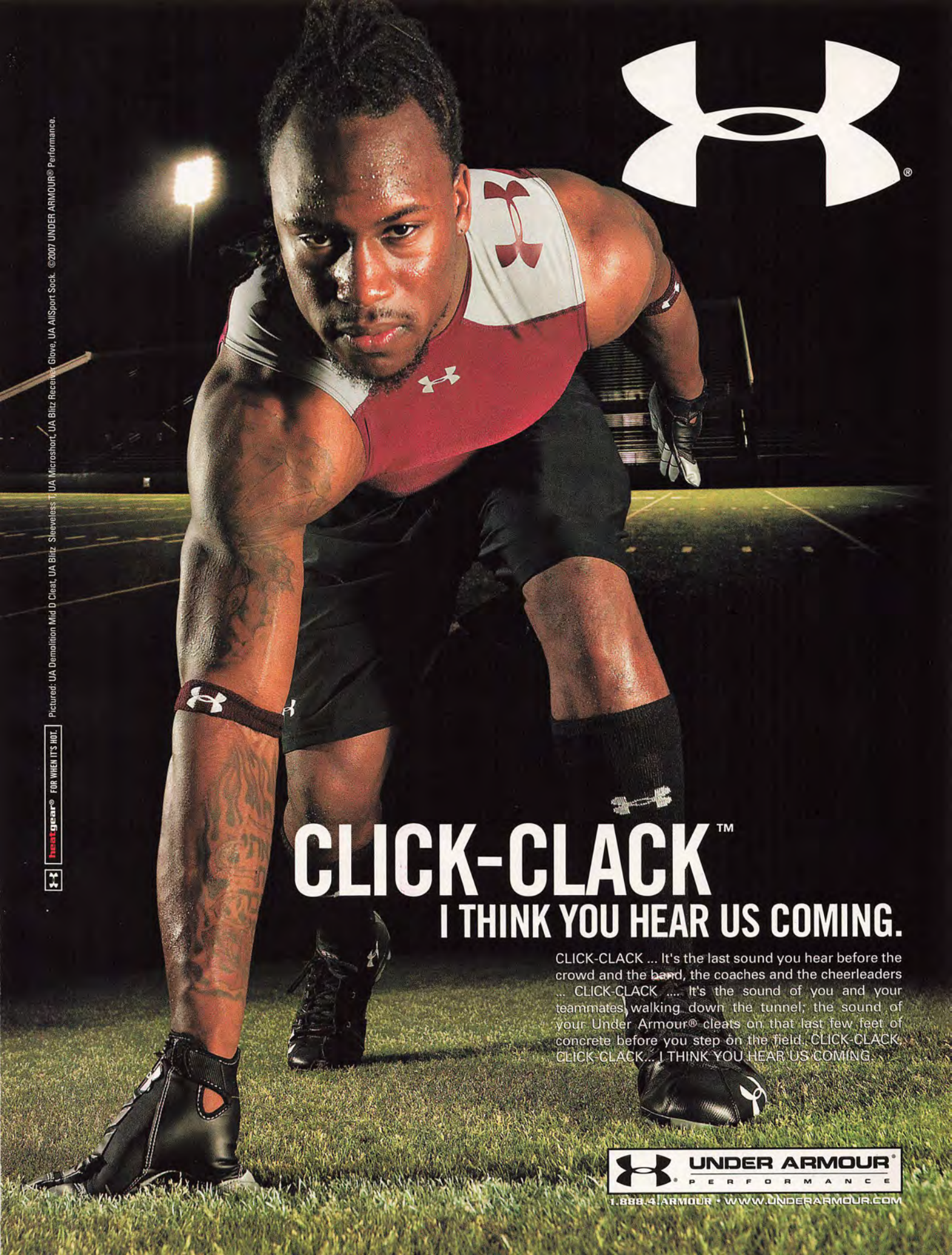
"That's the biggest thing, getting to the wall," he said. "But there are no guarantees. I just have to react to the situation."

Jackson's biggest obstacle might be his own reputation. The Bears expect opponents to avoid him as often as possible. But as coach Jeff Tedford said, "It's not as easy as you think to kick the ball away."

Texas A&M proved that in the Holiday Bowl, when the Aggies attempted to kick away from Jackson but ended up shanking a punt for zero net yards. Cal took over at the A&M 41 and was in the end zone four plays later.

"One of the things DeSean does," Alamar said, "is make teams pay for their mistakes."

— Jon Wilner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UNIT RANKINGS

OFFENSE

PHOTO MARK S. HAWKINS/ICON SMI

West Virginia's dynamic duo of Pat White (5) and Steve Slaton are nearly unstoppable on the ground.

TOP 10 BACKFIELDS

1. WEST VIRGINIA

Disclaimer: This category is always tricky.

Here's how it works: You have to have standouts at quarterback and running back. Which is why you won't see Arkansas (hmmm ... maybe Darren McFadden should play quarterback full time) and why there is no Clemson, which has the shifty and nifty runners but, alas, a rookie quarterback.

What we're looking for are All-American candidates at both spots. Let's see ... like Michigan, yes ... and West Virginia ... even better!

QB Pat White and RB Steve Slaton are the rocket fuel in the Mountaineers' offense, combining to rush for 34 touchdowns and nearly 3,000 yards last season. They each had a pair of 200-yard games on the ground.

There's nothing to think that they won't reach — or exceed — those numbers this year. And they'll be the most exciting duo while doing it.

2. MICHIGAN

In just about any other year, QB Chad Henne and RB Mike Hart — along with highly rated talent in reserve — would be the top backfield. H&H should be taking a big eraser to the Michigan record book this fall ... assuming good health, of course. Hart is 794 yards away from setting the school's rushing record, and Henne, sitting at a heavenly 7,777 yards is about a half season away from the passing mark.

3. USC

The Trojans have the most talented backfield in terms of five-star depth, but we can't pick them No. 1 in everything (although you can't tell by our defensive unit rankings). Anyway, USC has the Heisman candidate quarterback in John David Booty and has hoarded so many elite running backs that you wonder if Pete Carroll has some weird form of football kleptomania. Thing is, none of the backs has yet to accomplish college greatness.

4. TEXAS

Baby-faced Colt McCoy channeled the spirit of a grizzled veteran last season, throwing for a school-record 29 touchdowns as a redshirt freshman. Coach Mack Brown was thrilled with McCoy's improvement in the spring. Speedy Jamaal Charles should shine at running back as he takes his new role as the featured back and runs with it.

5. TENNESSEE

If that was the real Erik Ainge last year (and not the one from the 2005 season), then many good things will follow for the Vols, trying to win the East during a window when Florida is reloading. Coach Phillip Fulmer can ride whatever hot feet he wants at tailback, choosing among LaMarcus Coker, Arian Foster and Montario Hardesty.

6. TEXAS A&M

QB Stephen McGee hits like a linebacker, 274-pound Jorvorskie Lane hits like a pulling guard and Mike Goodson ... well, you have to catch him to find out.

7. LOUISVILLE

QB Brian Brohm will put on an audition for the No. 1 pick in the NFL draft, while a mix-and-match backfield suits any situation.

8. KENTUCKY

NFL-sized QB Andre Woodson blossomed as a junior, and RB Rafael Little should come up 1,000-yards big as he has in the past.

9. BOSTON COLLEGE

Matt Ryan is the best quarterback in the ACC. L.V. Whitworth and Andre Callender combined for more than 1,400 rushing yards. They're all seniors.

10. MISSOURI

Versatile QB Chase Daniel can pass and run his way through the Big 12. Tony Temple is the leading returning rusher in the league.

TOP 10 RECEIVERS

1. LOUISVILLE

There is 5-11 senior Harry Douglas, who is fast and shifty and always finds the open spaces. He did that often enough last season to set a school record with 1,265 yards.

Then there is the NFL prototype go-get-it receiver — 6-6 junior Mario Urrutia, who was a mere

27 yards short of joining Douglas in the 1,000-yard club last season. Urrutia projects as a 2009 first-rounder ... unless he decides to be a 2008 first-rounder.

Then there is a bit of a wild card in 6-3 senior Patrick Carter, a former Georgia Tech quarterback/returner whose athletic skills weren't fully on display last season because of an ankle injury. He can be super.

And, yeah, Louisville has tight ends who produce like receivers, too. Gary Barnidge averaged 16.5 yards on 31 catches.

2. FLORIDA

Urban Meyer has the do-it-all receivers, to go along with the do-everything quarterback, who make the shotgun-spread so much fun to watch. The bonus is that Andre Caldwell (129 career catches) came back for his senior season, helping show the way to sophomore Percy Harvin (although he already seems to have discovered the path to the end zone). Sophomore Jarred Fayson will get a workout, and junior Louis Murphy was a spring star. Cornelius Ingram, a bigger tight-end type, will be busy, too.

3. CAL

The Bears are going on their third season with the same productive trio — DeSean Jackson, Lavelle Hawkins and Robert Jordan. They combined for 151 catches for 2,236 yards and 18 touchdowns last season — and that was with Nate Longshore still tiptoeing through his first season as the starter.

4. OKLAHOMA

Sure, they have to worry about who is going to get them the ball, but there are options galore as 13 of 14 players who caught a pass last season are back. The headliner is junior Malcolm Kelly, who doesn't need a perfect pass because he's 6-4 and has a knack for leaping, reaching or otherwise contorting to make the catch.

5. KENTUCKY

A Top 10 backfield for Kentucky and a Top 5 group of receivers? Parity has arrived. The Wildcats earn their way onto this list with Keenan Burton (77 catches, 1,036 yards, 12 TDs) and Dicky Lyons Jr. (50 for 822) and the SEC's top tight end, Jacob Tamme.

6. ALABAMA

DJ Hall and Keith Brown are a nice security blanket for not-yet-30 offensive coordinator Major Applewhite, who has ample depth to rotate through the wideout positions.

7. MICHIGAN

Mario Manningham doesn't have trouble getting open, no matter the circumstances. It would be nice, though, if Adrian Arrington (40 catches last season) escaped from the spring doghouse.

8. HAWAII

The trio of Davone Bess, Jason Rivers and Ryan Grice-Mullen combined for 3,168 yards and 36 touchdowns last season.

9. VIRGINIA TECH

A share-the-wealth group, and it seems as if Eddie Royal, Josh Morgan, Justin Harper and Josh Hyman have been there as long as Frank Beamer.

10. PENN STATE

The opposite of Hawaii. Not eye-popping numbers, but Derrick Williams, Deon Butler and Jordan Norwood are weapons.

TOP 10 OFFENSIVE LINES

1. MICHIGAN

This ranking made possible by left tackle Jake Long's decision to return for his senior season. A high first-round pick protecting the valuable backside of quarterback Chad Henne is a great place to start.

There's more, of course. With Michigan linemen, there always is. Adam Kraus is among the finest guards in the country, and right guard Alex Mitchell has been through the Big Ten battles.

Another star is on the way, as sophomore center Justin Boren is coming off a spring in which he looked like he could dominate.

PHOTO BY GREGORY SHAMUS/GETTY IMAGES

Jake Long returns for his senior year and anchors the Michigan line.

2. USC

This ranking made possible by left tackle Sam Baker's decision to return for his senior season. A high first-round pick protecting the valuable backside of quarterback John David Booty is a great place to start.

Yes, there is more here, too. Junior right guard Chilo Rachal was a second-team All-Pac-10 choice last year; starter Drew Radovich moves from left guard to right tackle and oft-injured (and talented) Jeff Byers will help somewhere in the interior.

3. TEXAS A&M

Everything is coming together for the Aggies, who expect to feature five seniors in the starting lineup, four of whom are returning starters. The other, guard Chris Yoder, has 29 games of experience. Senior center Cody Wallace and guard Kirk Elder are all-star candidates.

4. OREGON STATE

Four starters return, including first-team All-Pac-10 guard Jeremy Perry, second-team all-league center Kyle DeVan and fourth-year starter Roy Schuening. That all makes a new starting quarterback very happy.

5. RUTGERS

The Scarlet Knights didn't go crazy with the pass last season, but it's still impressive that the line allowed only eight sacks, the fewest in the nation. Plus, there were all those holes for Ray Rice. Three starters return, and tackles Jeremy Zuttah and Pedro Sosa each earned postseason honors from the Big East.

6. ALABAMA

As a high school senior, left tackle Andre Smith announced his college choice by pulling a houndstooth hat from under a table. If that didn't endear him to Bama fans, his play as a true freshman did. All five starters return.

7. OKLAHOMA

Three full-time starters return for the Sooners, and junior college transfer Phil Loadholt joins the lineup. A "load" indeed. He's 6-8, 360.

8. LOUISVILLE

Left tackle George Bussey and center Eric Wood are two of the top linemen in the Big East, helping the Cardinals get a Top 10 ranking in this position group, too.

9. FLORIDA

The one area of the Gators not hit hard by departures, including left tackle Phil Trautwein and center Drew Miller, shifting from guard.

10. OHIO STATE

The Buckeyes have bookends — tackles Kirk Barton and Alex Boone — who will be vying for all-conference honors.

UNIT RANKINGS

DEFENSE

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE LINES

1. USC

Is it even remotely possible that a team could have the best group of defensive linemen, linebackers and defensive backs in the country? Well, kids, it is if you've been recruiting like Pete Carroll.

This position group will start a trend, as the Trojans, at every level of defense, have the finest collections of talent. On the line, it starts with All-American defensive tackle Sedrick Ellis, and end Lawrence Jackson has the ability to be so honored as well. Both are seniors.

Junior tackle Fili Moala is another imposing presence. Junior end Kyle Moore ended spring as a No. 1, but he might just be keeping the position warm for true freshman Everson Griffin, considered in some circles to be the top recruit in the country.

See, that's the way Carroll has been recruiting.

2. LSU

The Tigers have an (almost) legitimate case for having the top defensive line. LSU tackle Glenn Dorsey and end Tyson Jackson pretty much cancel out their Trojan counterparts. And if the Trojans want to compare blue-chip recruits, then the Tigers happily will lead with sophomore tackle Al Woods.

LSU has big, versatile, talented parts here, and aggressiveness under coordinator Bo Pelini that is rarely matched. Maybe we can see USC's and LSU's D-lines in action in the national title game ... that's what we really want.

3. RUTGERS

Defensive tackle Eric Foster is the emotional leader of the team, and he earned first-team All-American honors last season from the Football Writers Association of America. Jamal Westerman (8.5 sacks last season) is set at one end, and George Johnson is promising on the other side. Typical of the whole team, there is now quality depth.

4. SOUTH CAROLINA

The Gamecocks added so much new talent on the defensive line in the spring that they could afford to move talented end Capser Brinkley to outside linebacker. All the other starters return, but it's still a mad dash for playing time as prep school transfers Ladi Ajiboye and Clifton Geathers showed they're ready.

5. AUBURN

Pass-rusher Quentin Groves is expected to play some outside 'backer when Auburn uses a 3-4 this season, but, for these purposes, we'll consider him a lineman. A fast, scary, get-to-the-quarterback lineman. The Tigers have options because emerging players inside could allow 287-pound sophomore Sen'Derrick Marks to go to end.

6. IOWA

Slowed by injuries last season, but each starter is entering his third season as a starter. With better luck in the health department, this will be the best pass-rushing unit in the Big Ten.

7. FLORIDA STATE

The Seminoles have had four first-round NFL Draft picks from their defensive line this decade. Another possibility in the pipeline is senior DT Andre Fluellen.

8. UCLA

Bruce Davis loses tag-team end Justin Hickman — they each had 12.5 sacks last season — but everyone else is back. Seniors Kevin Brown and Brigham Harwell man the middle.

9. TCU

Senior Tommy Blake leads the way, but classmate and fellow end Chase Ortiz has been first-team All-Mountain West the past two seasons as well.

10. WISCONSIN

Three starters return from a line that allowed only four opponents last season to gain more than 300 yards.

TOP 10 LINEBACKERS

1. USC

This one really isn't close. Each Trojans starter is a candidate for All-American honors. Nobody else has that.

It's as USC assistant coach Sam Anno said, "We've got three guys who can be superstars."

There is no beginning or ending point to the linebacker group; it's just all one, big, fast blur headed

PHOTO BY JOHN PYLE/ICON SMI

USC's Sedrick Ellis (49) and Lawrence Jackson (96) lead a hard-charging Trojan defensive line.

toward some poor sap with the football. The individual numbers won't wow anybody, but nowhere in the nation is the competition for tackles as fierce as it is on the USC defense.

Senior Keith Rivers (85 tackles, three forced fumbles) is on the weak side, and junior Rey Maualuga (78 tackles) is in the middle. They were both first-team All-Pac-10. Brian Cushing, a junior, goes full time on the other side.

"No doubt, this is the best position on the team," coach Pete Carroll said.

2. VIRGINIA TECH

Only three of 13 opponents last season managed more than 13 points against the Hokies, and Vince Hall and Xavier Adibi were at the head of that effort — and have been for years. Together, they had 210 tackles, including 17 for loss, five forced fumbles and three interceptions.

3. OHIO STATE

The defense rallied around middle linebacker James Laurinaitis last season as the first-year starter won the Bronco Nagurski Trophy, given to the nation's most outstanding defender. He intercepted five passes and forced three fumbles. Speedy Marcus Freeman is back, too, and Larry Grant should carry on at the other spot.

4. SOUTH CAROLINA

Jasper and Casper Brinkley are the best set of football-playing twins with rhyming names in the country. Ah, heck, they might be the best linebacker duo in the SEC. They are one letter apart in name and a few feet closer on the field this season, with Casper moving from end to OLB. They had a combined 28 tackles for loss, including 12 sacks last season. Sophomore Rodney Paulk is no slouch, either.

5. PENN STATE

Dan Connor is taking the place of Paul Posluszny in the middle and he likely will take Poz's place in the record book as Penn State's all-time leading tackler. Which is saying something. Sean Lee will play a strong second-fiddle to Connor on the outside.

6. LSU

Senior Ali Highsmith, a returning All-SEC player, and junior Darry Beckwith are the leaders of an experienced group that can really fly.

7. OREGON STATE

Three starters return for the Beavers, including two-time second-team All-Pac-10 Derrick Doggett (hey, it's hard to be first-team all-league with those 'SC guys there) and Alan Darlin.

8. TENNESSEE

Jerod Mayo, Ryan Karl and Rico McCoy are three good reasons why the Vols should unseat linebacker-deprived Florida in the SEC East.

9. NEBRASKA

The high-level play of senior Bo Ruud is a given, and Steve Octavien and Corey McKeon just need to stay healthy. Octavien will be used as a pass-rusher supreme.

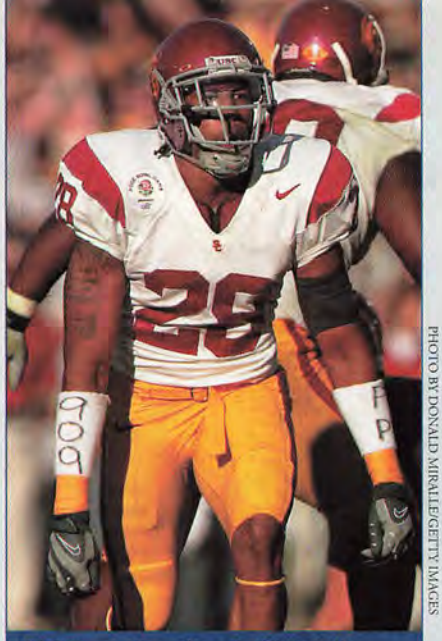


PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

USC cornerback Terrell Thomas is another Trojan defensive stalwart.

10. IOWA

Mike Klinkenborg picked up last season where Chad Greenway and Abdul Hodge left off in 2005.

TOP 10 DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. USC

The Trojans finish the defensive sweep of the position rankings with a flourish. The starting secondary returns intact, and two other players have starting experience.

Now, don't go running to the NCAA stats. USC was right in the middle range of Division I-A pass defense last season, allowing 204.8 yards per game. Nothing special there … until you consider the Trojans played nine games in the pass-happy Pac-10, and two more against quarterbacks who could air it out — Brady Quinn and Chad Henne.

Bear in mind that USC was 22nd nationally in passing efficiency defense, which is significantly better than its rank in yards allowed, and that number should improve again because of experience, depth and a return to the turnover-forcing machine typical of Pete Carroll's defenses.

As for the players, cornerback Terrell Thomas and strong safety Kevin Ellison are the leaders, with 6-4 sophomore Taylor Mays a former future star who has arrived at free safety. Cary Harris is back at the other corner spot, with safety Josh Pinkard and corner Kevin Thomas, both of whom missed most of last season due to injuries, challenging for time.

2. OKLAHOMA

If there is something the Stoops brothers know, it's how to recruit and coach defensive backs. Check out head coach Bob at Oklahoma (and then check out head coach Mike and defensive coordinator Mark at Arizona further down the list).

The Sooners have stockpiled seven players with starting experience, including three who earned second-team All-Big 12 honors last season — Marcus Walker, Reggie Smith and Nic Harris.

3. MIAMI

Secondary is Miami's best and deepest position, although that will be tested with safety Anthony Reddick, a former freshman sensation out for the season because of a torn ACL in his left knee. He missed most of last season because of an ACL tear in his *right* knee. Still, the 'Canes have *Lindy's* top-ranked safety (junior Kenny Phillips) and their usual assortment of athleticism.

4. GEORGIA

The Bulldogs were second in the SEC with 19 interceptions, and bring back Paul Oliver, who gets the nod over Alabama's Simeon Castille as the best cover man in the SEC. Safety Kelin Johnson is the enforcer.

5. ARIZONA

Teams might stay away from *Lindy's* No.1 cornerback, senior Antoine Cason, but quarterbacks will find another fourth-year starter — Wilrey Fontentot — on the other side. Dominic Patrick is back at safety, where there is ample talent to fill the Wildcats' frequent nickel package.

6. VIRGINIA TECH

Cornerback Brandon Flowers was All-ACC last season. On the other side, Victor "Macho" Harris can't afford to be bad with that nickname.

7. FLORIDA STATE

Myron Rolle is the top free safety in the sophomore class, and junior corner Tony Carter gives FSU lock-down ability.

8. LSU

The Tigers were super at safety last year. Those guys are gone, and the secondary's assets are now strongest at cornerback with Jonathan Zenon and Chevis Jackson.

9. RUTGERS

Safeties Courtney Greene and Ron Girault are All-Big East players. Girault is entering his fourth season as a starter; Greene is a fearsome hitter. The McCourty twins (Devin and Jason) are solid at corner.

10. SOUTH FLORIDA

Trae Williams was an All-Big East selection in 2006, and fellow cornerback Mike Jenkins can pretty much run down anyone from behind.

ILLUSTRATION BY TIM WILLIAMS

EVERYBODY GETS ANOTHER GAME ... *SORT OF*

By Anthony Gimino

Remember those "hurry-up-and-run-the-clock" rule changes that were installed last season? Never mind.

Basically, the Football Rules Committee realized that those goofy rules were designed for people who didn't like football ... and so they gave us the equivalent of a game back.

We still have 12 regular-season games to watch each fall, but the 15 minutes "saved" for each game by the lousy rule changes add up to what amounts to enough snaps for one complete game of football. And they've given us those plays back.

An average of seven plays per game per team, times 12 games, hmmm, carry the one... that's 84 more offensive snaps for your favorite team!

The silly notion that the clock should start on a change of possession when the ball is placed down by the referees, and when they say "go" on kickoffs (rather than when the ball is touched by the receiving team), became apparent very quickly in 2006. We're glad that the powers that be showed they actually like football enough to correct themselves.

Overall, the Division I-A average was 64 plays per team last season, although some games were so short that Auburn ran just 37 plays against Georgia.

"I just think those timing rules were so flawed because they didn't add to the strategic nature of the game," said San Jose State coach Dick Tomey, pointing out that mostly it just made it more difficult for teams to come from behind in the fourth quarter.

This is a big deal for offense, for fan excitement, for record-breaking. Take Texas sophomore quarterback Colt McCoy as an example, and follow along with our rough math.

The Longhorns passed 43.4 percent of the time last season. With 84 more plays this season, McCoy presumably would attempt 36 more passes. He averaged 8.1 yards per attempt last year ... which all means he should throw for 291 extra yards just because of the rules changes.

So, if he stays for three seasons (and assuming bowl games) the clock rules should add 1,000 yards to his career total.

Our calculator almost blew a fuse when we tried to punch in the figures for Hawaii's Colt Brennan, before spitting out 560 more passing yards with those extra snaps.

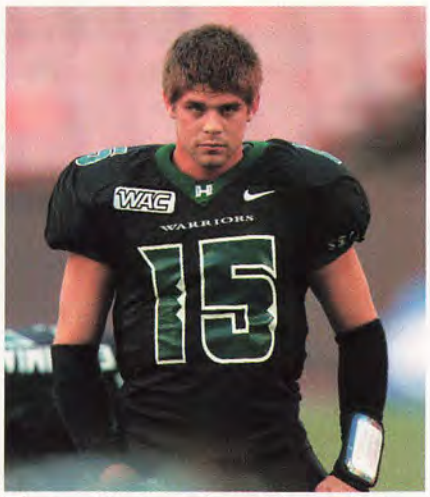


PHOTO BY DAVID ALLIO/CON SMI

The new timing rules will boost Colt Brennan's bottom line ... not that he needs the help.

DON'T MISS THE KICKOFFS

So, if the NCAA is adding length back to the games, it has to trim somewhere else. It will do this three ways — two to reduce dawdling, and one to... well, one to help the offenses, for some reason.

- The play clock will be set to 15 seconds, not 25, after TV timeouts. That'll work fine.
- Team timeouts, in televised games, will be shortened to 30 seconds, down from 65. That would seem to invite some confusion and a tricky gadget here or there.
- Kickoffs will be from the 30-yard line, not the 35, resulting in fewer touchbacks that stop the clock ... and more exciting kickoff returns (and more full-collision injuries).

"I don't like it," said new Iowa State head coach Gene Chizik, offering a decidedly defensive viewpoint, following his 11 years as defensive coordinator, including at Auburn and Texas. "Many more drives are going to start further down the field."

The kick return, one of the most exciting plays in football, will be in greater abundance, putting more pressure on the defense. Perhaps teams will have to put more front-line players on kick coverage.

"You kick a ball into the wind, the guy might catch it at the 20, and you're starting on offense at the 40 or 50," Texas coach Mack Brown said. "It's even more important now to find that kicker with a dynamic leg."

A shrewd veteran such as Tomey, who will be 69 when the season starts, saw it coming, saying that in the spring, "We worked on kickoff returns more than ever in my coaching experience."

PHOTO BY STEPHEN O'BRIEN/ICON SMI

BCS MATCHUPS

College football enters the second season of the "double-hosting" system, which means one of the big four bowls will do it all over again a week later for the national title game.

After the Fiesta Bowl folks got things started last season, the venue changes to New Orleans, which plays host to the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 1, and then to the BCS National Championship game on Jan. 7.

Otherwise there are no changes in the BCS formula or who is eligible to be considered. A refresher:

The champions of the six biggest conferences — ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and SEC — earn automatic bids.

The champions of the five other leagues can earn an automatic bid ...

- If they are ranked in the top 12 of the final BCS rankings, or,
- If they are ranked in the top 16 and are higher than any of the "Big Six" conference champions.
- If multiple champs from the lower conferences qualify in this scenario, only the higher-rated one gets the automatic berth.

Notre Dame gets an automatic berth if it is ranked in the top eight, but like any other team, it can qualify for an at-large spot with nine victories and a top 14 ranking.

BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME

Monday, Jan. 7, 2008
New Orleans • Superdome
BCS #1 vs. BCS #2
Lindy's pick: USC vs. LSU

ORANGE BOWL

Thursday, Jan. 3, 2008
Miami • Dolphin Stadium
ACC champ vs. BCS at-large
Lindy's pick: Virginia Tech vs. Oklahoma

FIESTA BOWL

Wednesday, Jan. 2, 2008
Glendale, Ariz.
University of Phoenix Stadium
Big 12 champ vs. BCS at-large
Lindy's pick: Texas vs. Wisconsin

ROSE BOWL

Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008
Pasadena, Calif. • Rose Bowl
Pac-10 champ vs. Big Ten champ
Lindy's pick: Cal vs. Michigan

SUGAR BOWL

Tuesday, Jan. 1, 2008
New Orleans • Superdome
SEC champ vs. BCS at-large
Lindy's pick: Tennessee vs. West Virginia

CHA-CHA-CHA-CHANGES

Nothing stays the same. To wit:

■ **TECHNOLOGY:** UTEP coach Mike Price, using duct tape at first and later Velcro, attached a small camera to the top of his quarterbacks' helmets in the spring. He then was able to break down practice film from the quarterback's point of view, better able to critique the decision-making. Next up at UTEP: Madden '08 with the Wii remote control.

■ **NUMBERS:** Notre Dame redshirt freshman Demetrius Jones, one of four in the battle to replace quarterback Brady Quinn, brings athletic pizzazz and a truckload of confidence to the position. He changed his jersey from No. 4 to No. 3, embracing the historical significance of Joe Montana, Rick Mirer and his new quarterbacks coach, Ron Powlus.

■ **TIMES:** The trend nationally is for more limited access to players and coaches, and we're not just talking Nick Saban here. Purdue's Joe Tiller shut down access to spring practice (with similar plans for the fall) because he was tired of all the ensuing Internet chatter. "I'm tired of blogging and guys talking about our practices in postings and all that. It's more problems than it is value," he said.

■ **LOGOS:** As if being the Beavers wasn't distinctive enough, Oregon State is dropping the "U" from its logo and going with a new interlocking "OS." The school wanted to separate itself from other OSU's — Ohio State and Oklahoma State. In other news, Troy will remain the Trojans.

■ **NICKNAMES:** Central Florida — or is it simply UCF now? — has a new logo, too, and a more streamlined name. The school's athletic teams are lopping off "Golden" and going with just "Knights." Lucky for us, we're still blessed with Knights of Scarlet (Rutgers) and Knights of Black (Army).

PHOTO BY DAVID MAXWELL/GETTY IMAGES

Ohio State's Todd Boeckman will try to fill Troy Smith's shoes for the Buckeyes while holding off some talented competition.

FILLING THE BIGGEST CLEATS

It's never easy to follow a legend, but somebody has to do it. You never know ... sometimes a Heisman winner follows a Heisman winner (see Matt Leinart and Carson Palmer). And sometimes they don't (see Chris Rix and Chris Weinke).

Anyway, here is what's happening with six of the toughest guys to replace:

■ **Troy Smith, QB, Ohio State:** It's almost sure to be junior Todd Boeckman, although sophomore Rob Schoenhoft and/or redshirt freshman Antonio Henton can get an audition Sept. 1 against Youngstown State.

VERDICT: Either way, the position loses a lot of flair.

■ **Adrian Peterson, RB, Oklahoma:** Next in line is Allen Patrick, a former JC transfer defensive back who actually out-performed the freakishly athletic Peterson in some agility drills. Impressive. Spring star DeMarco Murray, a redshirt freshman with motor and moves, is right there, too.

VERDICT: Most teams should be so lucky to have the Sooners' backfield.

■ **Calvin Johnson, WR, Georgia Tech:** Forget it. One guy isn't replacing him. What the Yellow Jackets have to do is lean on All-ACC RB Tashard Choice and hope new QB Taylor Bennett isn't as mistake-prone as Reggie Ball.

VERDICT: It's going to be all about Tech's superb defense, anyway.

■ **JaMarcus Russell, QB, LSU:** Matt Flynn, whose claim to fame is being the starter for the 2005 Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl wipeout of Miami, takes over. He doesn't have the physical skills of Russell, but sophomore Ryan Perrilloux might. "We need both," coach Les Miles said.

VERDICT: No worries. Tigers won a national title with Matt Mauck at QB.

■ **Brady Quinn, QB, Notre Dame:** The Irish had four candidates in the spring, including super recruit Jimmy Clausen. A true freshman QB taking Notre Dame's first snap of the season? If true, NBC would have a Sunday Night movie about it a week later.

VERDICT: Too close to call ... but Demetrius Jones has to be on the field somewhere.

■ **Joe Thomas, OT, Wisconsin:** Could be a time-share between sophomore Jake Bscherer and redshirt freshman Gabe Carimi. P.J. Hill will miss running behind the big fella.

VERDICT: Manageable, because everyone else on the O-line depth chart returns.

SIX MUST-SEE CONFERENCE GAMES

1. Ohio State at Michigan, Nov. 17 — If Wolverines don't win, it's gonna feel like Chad Henne, Mike Hart and Jake Long came back for 'nuthin.

2. Oklahoma vs. Texas, Oct. 6 — (in Dallas) — The Horns have a little two-game winning streak to crow about.

3. UCLA at USC, Dec. 1 — Bruins' D swatted Trojans from national title game in '06. That same defense is back.

4. Tennessee at Florida, Sept. 15 — For the early lead in SEC East and first chance to see if young Gators have what it takes to repeat.

5. Louisville at West Virginia, Nov. 8 — Perhaps for league title and BCS title game ... unless Rutgers and South Florida have their Big East say.

6. Alabama at Auburn, Nov. 24 — The Iron Bowl. Nick Saban. Auburn's five-game winning streak in the series. Madness.

SIX MUST-SEE NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

1. Virginia Tech at LSU, Sept. 8 — A second-week game matching Top 10 teams with national title implications? This is why college football is better than college basketball.

2. USC at Nebraska, Sept. 15 — Something tells us USC won't win as easily as it did last season in the Coliseum (28-10).

3. Miami at Oklahoma, Sept. 8 — The last time these teams played, Jimmy's Hurricanes won the national title by beating Barry's Sooners in the 1988 Orange Bowl (20-14).

4. Florida State at Florida, Nov. 26 — It might change by this date, but Urban Meyer enters season undefeated (6-0) against Gators' chief rivals — Tennessee, Georgia and Florida State.

5. Alabama vs. Florida State (in Jacksonville), Sept. 29 — Intriguing ... two programs in various stages of finding their way back to the top.

6. Tennessee at Cal, Sept. 1 — Bears wilted in Knoxville last season, eager for opening-week payback.

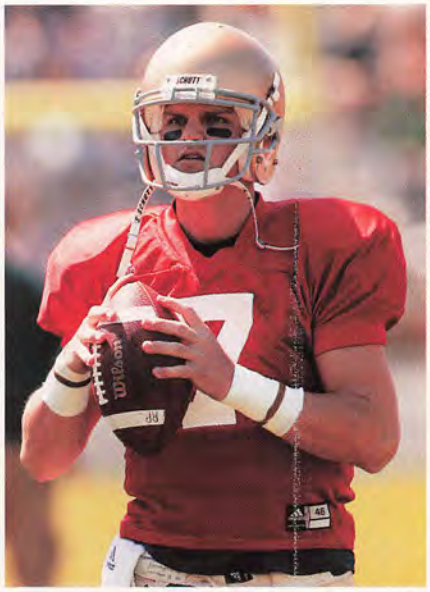


PHOTO BY ANDY ALTENBURGER/ICON SMI

Notre Dame's Jimmy Clausen carries the burden of high expectations.

FIVE IMPACT FRESHMEN

Not necessarily the best true freshmen, but where ability intersects with opportunity at a top-level program.

- Eric Berry, DB, Tennessee — Vols have three openings in secondary and little depth. The nation's top prep corner to the rescue!
- Jimmy Clausen, QB, Notre Dame — Could be the starter. Could redshirt. Could be almost impossible to live up to the hype.
- Joe Haden, DB, Florida — The Gators could/will have several true freshmen in key roles. Haden enrolled early and staked a claim in the secondary.
- Joe McKnight, RB, USC — No room at tailback for USC? We'll see about that. If nothing else, how about some Bush-like returns?
- Donovan Warren, CB, Michigan — Plucked from USC's backyard (Long Beach Poly), the speedster will have a chance in the fall to take over for Leon Hall.

Ohio State fans and players celebrate their 2006 win over Michigan.

PHOTO BY JAMIE SABAU

DEAR SANTA ...

We all wish the college football season could start tomorrow, but you can't get everything you want. Still, it would be nice if *some* of our wishes came true.

We wish ...

- That we could, practical matters aside, have an eight-team playoff, featuring the winners of the six major conferences and two at-large teams. That basically makes the conference season a week-by-week elimination while providing a more satisfying ending.
- That we could stop whining about a playoff because it's not going to happen at least until the 2010 season, because of TV contracts.
- That Southern Miss' Britt Barefoot really kicked without a shoe.
- That Marshall receiver Darius Passmore was actually a quarterback.
- That Navy, doing so well under coach Paul Johnson, could finally end a 43-game losing streak to Notre Dame that dates to the Roger Staubach era.
- That Penn State defensive back Knowledge Timmons and Hawaii offensive lineman Hercules Satele could finally settle the brains vs. brawn debate.
- That recruits stop holding announcement press conferences, the wishbone makes a comeback, Nick Saban invites the media to his house for dinner, Steve Spurrier says nice things about Tennessee, and the bowl season doesn't inflate past an already engorged 32 games.
- That halftime interviews with head coaches simply went away.
- That Lee Corso, bless him, continues to put on stupid mascot heads. (Some would say, leave them on!?)
- That we could see what happens if Ruud (Nebraska linebacker Bo), Nasti (Eastern Illinois linebacker Nick) and Polite (Middle Tennessee defensive back Roy) were all in a room together. Perhaps Florida Atlantic linebacker Cergile Sincere could moderate.
- That every time Bobby Bowden says "dadgum," somebody could do something useful ... like, you know, donate $100 to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

HEISMAN WATCH

It's Darren McFadden's Heisman to lose, which only seems right after he finished second last season. He's so versatile, so able to do amazing things in different ways, that whatever offense Arkansas runs shouldn't be an issue.

Colt Brennan snuck up on some voters last season — especially those sleepy ones who can't stay up late out East — but that won't be the case this season. Just in case you need the reminder: He completed 406 of 559 passes last season for 5,549 yards and 58 touchdowns. Un-bee-lievable.

Then you have another Colt — what are the odds? — down Texas way. He'll be doing more resetting of the Longhorns' record book. Tim Tebow a reach at No. 4? Maybe. But he looks all the world like the next "it" player in college football, never mind about his lack of starting experience.

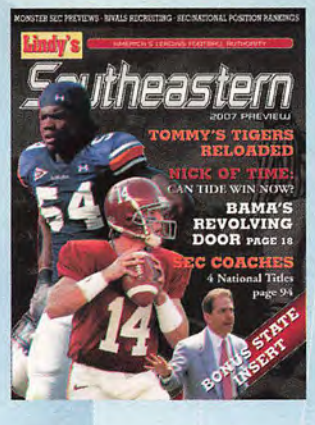
DeSean Jackson is completely deserving of being in the Top 5, even if his position group almost never wins this thing. The West Virginia guys — Steve Slaton and Pat White — might split some votes. And while we like John David Booty, we don't like him as much as the top six guys, although as the QB on the No. 1 team he could be the "default" candidate for many voters.

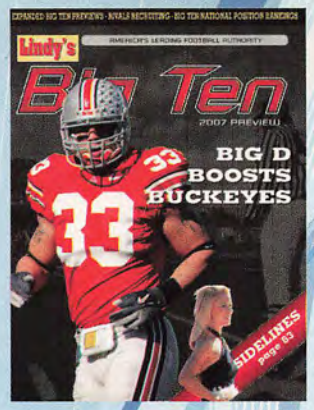
Ray Rice and Brian Brohm deserve to be higher, but what are you going to do? Michigan could have a trio of candidates — Mike Hart, Chad Henne, Mario Manningham. Give us the QB, for now.

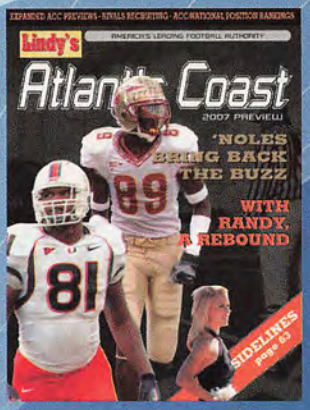
PHOTO BY JOHN RIVERA/ICON SMI

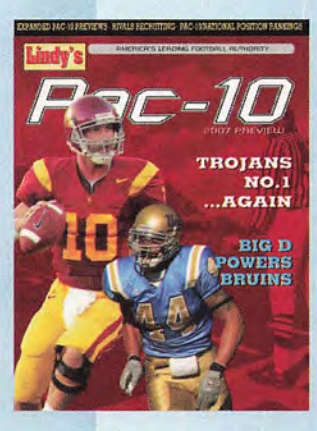
Colt McCoy hooked 'em as a freshman and may one day hook a Heisman Trophy.

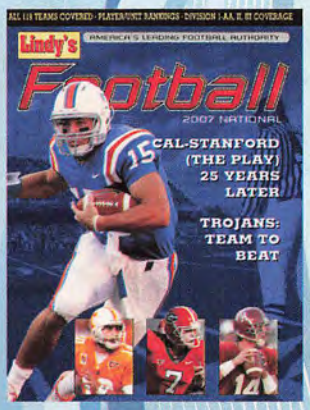
1. Darren McFadden	RB	Jr.	Arkansas
2. Colt Brennan	QB	Sr.	Hawaii
3. Colt McCoy	QB	So.	Texas
4. Tim Tebow	QB	So.	Florida
5. DeSean Jackson	WR	Jr.	Cal
6. Steve Slaton	RB	Jr.	West Virginia
7. John David Booty	QB	Sr.	USC
8. Ray Rice	RB	Jr.	Rutgers
9. Brian Brohm	QB	Sr.	Louisville
10.Chad Henne	QB	Sr.	Michigan

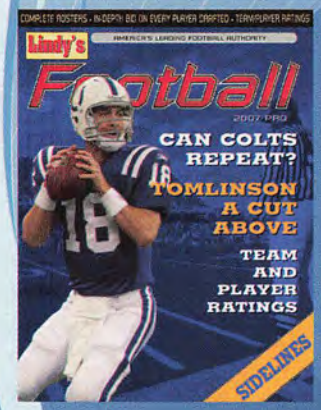


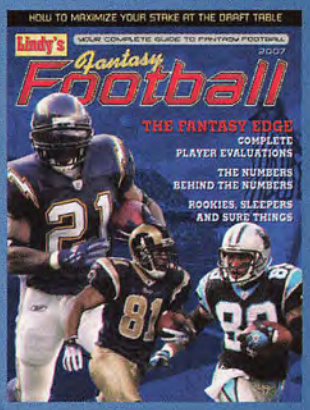












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HEISMAN CURSE

Six of the seven Heisman winners this decade have gone on to play in the BCS national title game. Usually with disastrous results.

Part of the reason is that the dang voters pick the wrong guy for the Heisman, too often locking in on the quarterback on a top team. Let's broaden our scope, fellas.

And maybe it's that the Heisman winner just gets too distracted in December, or that the other team in the title game successfully plays the slighted underdog card.

In any case, let's review:

2000: Chris Weinke, Florida State: Two interceptions, a fumble and no points in a 13-2 loss to Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl.

2001: Eric Crouch, Nebraska: Fumbled on his third carry and completed a piddling five passes as Miami smothered the Huskers 37-14 in the Rose Bowl.

2003: Jason White, Oklahoma: Was sacked five times, was just 13 of 37 and threw two picks, one returned for a TD. LSU won the Sugar Bowl, 21-14.

2004: Matt Leinart, USC: Hey, we have a winner! Five touchdown passes and 332 yards through the air in a 55-19 beatdown of Oklahoma.

2005: Reggie Bush, USC: A key fumble and wasn't even on the field for a failed late-game fourth-down play, allowing Vince Young to steal the show in the Rose Bowl (UT, 41-38).

2006: Troy Smith, Ohio State: Florida had more sacks (five) than Smith had completions (four) in a 41-14 Gators' rout.

So, not only do Heisman winners turn into title-game losers, four of them (Weinke, Crouch, White and Smith) had pretty much the worst games *of their careers*. Cursed, indeed.

COMEBACK PLAYERS

Here are 10 players who missed most or all of last season, or have been inactive for even longer. Don't forget about them ...

- **Micah Andrews, RB, Wake Forest (knee)** — Starting tailback expected back in fall for defending ACC champs.
- **Sean Bailey, WR, Georgia (knee)** — Big-play threat missed all of last season.
- **Kyle Bell, RB, Colorado State (knee)** — Was *Lindy's* Mountain West preseason Offensive Player of the Year in 2006 ... then suffered torn ACL five days before season opener.
- **Jeff Byers, OL, USC (back)** — Played in one game in the past two seasons because of injuries; can potentially start at guard or center.
- **Thomas Brown, RB, Georgia (knee)** — He and Kregg Lumpkin make a nice 1-2 combination.
- **Joe Cowan, WR, UCLA (knee)** — Caught 35 passes in 2005 but missed all of last season. Is a needed target for Ben Olson or his younger brother, Patrick Cowan.
- **Hershel Dennis, RB, USC (knee)** — Time was, he was above Reggie Bush and LenDale White on the depth chart. Hasn't played since 2004.
- **Brian Johnson, QB, Utah (knee)** — Run-pass threat was near national lead in total offense late in 2005 before injury.
- **Tyrone Prothro, WR, Alabama (leg)** — Suffered a gruesome compound fracture of his left leg on Oct. 1, 2005, and needed a fourth surgery in March. Could miss 2007 season, too.
- **Brian Stamper, OL, Vanderbilt (back)** — Preseason All-SEC in 2006, the right tackle is back to lead a veteran line.

PHOTO BY GRANT HALVERSON/GETTY IMAGES

Georgia's Thomas Brown and Kregg Lumpkin will give the Bulldogs a solid 1-2 punch at running back.

THE CONFERENCE OF (OVERRATED) QUARTERBACKS

The Pac-10 produces the best college passers, which is why the league likes to refer to itself as the conference of quarterbacks.

NFL teams agreed, picking 11 Pac-10 quarterbacks in the first round in the drafts from 1991 to 2006. Included in that group were two No. 1 overall selections — recently retired Drew Bledsoe, who did just fine for himself, and Carson Palmer, one of the best in the AFC.

Other than that, not much.

It's too early to pass judgment on Matt Leinart, who is just getting started with the Cardinals, and Aaron Rodgers, who is still waiting behind Brett Favre in Green Bay. But check out these major Pac-10 first-round busts:

Todd Marinovich, Tommy Maddox, Ryan Leaf, Akili Smith, Cade McNown, Joey Harrington ... those are some of the biggest disappointments *in draft history*. And it's not like Kyle Boller has done much with his starting chances, either.

For the record, the SEC was next with seven first-round quarterbacks from 1991 to 2006, with a huge hit (Peyton Manning) and also some wild misses — Heath Shuler, Tim Couch.

The Big Ten had only one first-round QB in that period — Kerry Collins of Penn State in 1994.

HOT, YOUNG, ASSISTANTS

Here are 10 young assistants — and by young, we're talking not older than 40 — whose names are currently (or should be) being programmed into many athletic directors' speed dials. They will be head coaches sooner rather than later. (Age at beginning of season).

- **Major Applewhite, Alabama offensive coordinator (29)** — Was youngest O-coordinator in the nation last season at Rice. And now this. The definition of upwardly mobile.
- **Ron English, Michigan defensive coordinator (39)** — Who will get him first — another college or the NFL?
- **James Franklin, Kansas State offensive coordinator (35)** — Has some NFL experience and time as recruiting coordinator at Maryland.
- **Mike Locksley, Illinois offensive coordinator (37)** — Top-notch recruiter who has a rising star in QB Juice Williams.
- **Dan Mullen, Florida offensive coordinator (35)** — Following Urban Meyer and finding success at each stop has to pay off sometime.
- **Tyrone Nix, South Carolina defensive coordinator (34)** — Built tough defenses at Southern Miss; doing the same for Steve Spurrier.
- **Bo Pelini, LSU defensive coordinator (39)** — So highly regarded, he can afford to be patient and wait for the perfect job.
- **Steve Sarkisian, USC offensive coordinator (33)** — Moves into coordinator role this season in a launching-pad job; turned down Raiders.
- **Mark Stoops, Arizona defensive coordinator (40)** — More than the name, he has ever-improving results with the Wildcats.
- **Brent Venables, Oklahoma defensive coordinator (36)** — Good company: Has been co-coordinator at OU with Pelini and Mike Stoops.

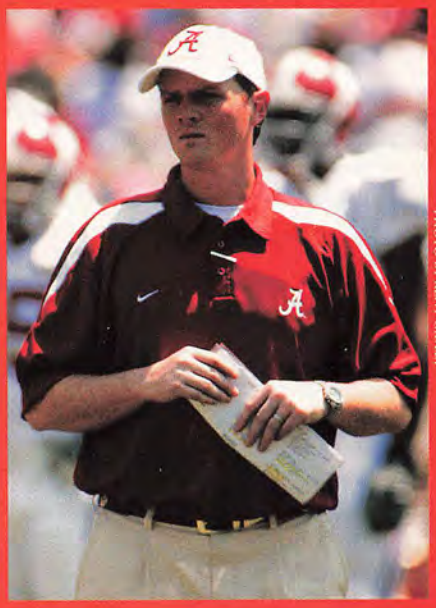

PHOTO BY KENT GIDLEY

The perfect fit at Alabama: New offensive coordinator Major Applewhite was named after Tide great running back Major Ogilvie.

SCOPING THE NATION

Coaching Changes

You could see this coming. After a year in which there were only 10 coaching changes — and just three in the BCS conferences — it was inevitable that the coaching carousel would be going 'round like a Tilt-A-Whirl.

Yep, restless fans, restless athletic directors and restless coaches contributed to a dizzying 23 coaching changes — that's nearly 20 percent of Division I-A jobs.

Here's who was, who is and how it will be:

AIR FORCE

Out: Fisher DeBerry (retired)
In: Troy Calhoun

Calhoun, most recently the Houston Texans offensive coordinator, returns to his alma mater where he is scrapping the triple option in favor of multiple formations. Get used to the Falcons in the shotgun, and let's throw!

ALABAMA

Out: Mike Shula (fired)
In: Nick Saban

Forget about the lying about staying with the Miami Dolphins and his prickly relations with the media ... the guy can coach, instill toughness, and recruit the heck out of the area. Bama scored.

ARIZONA STATE

Out: Dirk Koetter (fired)
In: Dennis Erickson

This could be the final stop for Erickson. No, really. We mean it. OK ... stop that laughing. Even if it's short term, Erickson should do what Koetter couldn't — beat ranked teams and win Pac-10 games in California.

ARMY

Out: Bobby Ross (retired)
In: Stan Brock

On the same day Ross stepped down, Army promoted Brock, who had been the offensive line coach for three years. Brock, a 16-year NFL veteran, is respected but still has to prove his coaching chops.

BOSTON COLLEGE

Out: Tom O'Brien (N.C. State)
In: Jeff Jagodzinski

Jagodzinski spent the previous eight seasons in the NFL and has not a lick of head coaching experience. He inherits a rock-solid program, but will loosen up the offense a bit from the buttoned-down O'Brien to try to get the Eagles a bit higher.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN

Out: Brian Kelly (Cincinnati)
In: Butch Jones

The Chippewas reached out to Jones, a former CMU assistant who was coaching at West Virginia. This is a fairly seamless transition, as he'll continue to run a spread offense for the defending MAC champs.

CINCINNATI

Out: Mark Dantonio (Mich. State)
In: Brian Kelly

The Bearcats lost a rising star, but likely caught lightning in a bottle again with Kelly. The Big Ten will come calling for Kelly if he does well, but that's probably a fine tradeoff for UC.

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL

Out: Don Strock (fired)
In: Mario Cristobal

After a winless season, FIU hired the 36-year-old Cristobal, most recently an assistant with the Miami Hurricanes. A spread offense and more recruiting muscle make this an excellent choice.

IDAHO

Out: Dennis Erickson (ASU)
In: Robb Akey

Not wanting to be burned again, Idaho put a $1 million buyout clause into Akey's contract for the first couple of years. Akey, from across the border at Washington State, is in no hurry to go elsewhere.

IOWA STATE

Out: Dan McCarney (fired)
In: Gene Chizik

Iowa State landed an in-demand assistant before someone else grabbed him. Chizik has coordinated outstanding defenses at Auburn and Texas ... can he build a whole team at Iowa State?

LOUISIANA TECH

Out: Jack Bicknell III (fired)
In: Derek Dooley

The son of Georgia legend Vince Dooley, Derek Dooley quickly moved up the ranks to head coach after serving an apprenticeship under Nick Saban. High marks for his first recruiting class.

LOUISVILLE

Out: Bobby Petrino (NFL)
In: Steve Kragthorpe

If you had to lose a coach to the Atlanta Falcons, the proper response for a Top 10 program is to hire a guy on everyone's wish list. Kragthrope played his cards right, waiting at Tulsa until the right job came along.

MIAMI

Out: Larry Coker (fired)
In: Randy Shannon

Shannon, elevated from defensive coordinator, wasted no time in a laying down a his-way-or-the-highway approach to a program in search of more accountability. "I need team, team, team guys," he said.

MICHIGAN STATE

Out: John L. Smith (fired)
In: Mark Dantonio

Smith, the outsider, never connected in East Lansing as his teams fizzled to three consecutive losing seasons. Dantonio, an ex-MSU assistant and Ohio State defensive coordinator, has more sensible Big Ten values.

MINNESOTA

Out: Glen Mason (fired)
In: Tim Brewster

Brewster is a coaching shot of adrenaline, a glad-handing bundle of energy who spins the atmosphere 180 degrees in Minnesota. He's never been a head coach, yet this could be golden.

NORTH CAROLINA

Out: John Bunting (fired)
In: Butch Davis

Rejuvenated after his NFL experience (when will these college coaches ever learn?), Davis tries to wake the sleeping giant. He could do for the Heels what Mack Brown did in the 1990s.

N.C. STATE

Out: Chuck Amato (fired)
In: Tom O'Brien

A change of direction here. O'Brien is meticulous, disciplined and no-nonsense. Six losses last season were by less than a touchdown. A little more attention to details could turn it around.

NORTH TEXAS

Out: Darrell Dickey (fired)
In: Todd Dodge

With a no-huddle spread offense, Dodge became a Texas high school coaching star in recent years. Some college was going to make him a head coach. The Mean Green got there first.

RICE

Out: Todd Graham (Tulsa)
In: David Bailiff

Owls were disheartened when Graham left after one season that resulted in the team's first bowl since 1961. At least Bailiff, the ex-head coach at I-AA Texas State, isn't starting from scratch.

STANFORD

Out: Walt Harris (fired)
In: Jim Harbaugh

Another coaching move that yields a complete exchange of personality. Harbaugh: "I will attack this endeavor with enthusiasm unknown to mankind." A worthy gamble here for Stanford.

TULANE

Out: Chris Scelfo (fired)
In: Bob Toledo

Recycled veteran Pac-10 coaches are in vogue — Mike Price at UTEP, Dick Tomey at San Jose State, Rich Brooks at Kentucky. Toledo, formerly of UCLA, brings a proven offensive blueprint.

TULSA

Out: Steve Kragthorpe (Louisville)
In: Todd Graham

The school took a potentially bad situation and made it good by hiring hot Rice coach (and former Tulsa defensive coordinator) Graham, who hired Arkansas' Gus Malzahn to install a no-huddle spread attack.

UAB

Out: Watson Brown (Tenn. Tech)
In: Neil Callaway

Callaway, walking into a rebuilding job, immediately set stricter team discipline, including length of hair. It's his first head coaching job, although he has impeccable credentials around the SEC.

SCOPING THE NATION

LINDY'S NEEDS YOUR HELP!

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Sincerely,
Lindy Davis
Publisher

Ranking the Conferences

1. SEC

It's not even a debate. The SEC has the grandest college football cathedrals, great tradition, the most NFL players, the highest attendance, the most bowl appearances and most bowl victories this decade.

All that, and two national champions in the past four years (with an undefeated team mixed in there, too).

Now, the addition of Nick Saban at Alabama gives the league four coaches who have won national titles. No other league can claim that.

The league's primo national title contender this season is LSU. Elsewhere, it's a crowded field. The SEC isn't quite as packed with Top 10 timber as in some seasons, but who can count out Tennessee, Florida, Arkansas, Auburn, Georgia and (nowadays) South Carolina?

2. ACC

Expansion was supposed to add elite teams to the ACC. Hasn't happened. Old standby Florida State won in 2005 with an awful 8-5 overall record. Last season, it was Wake Forest, which still seems like a dream.

So much for national championship contenders. Why is the ACC ranked No. 2? What the league has is amazing depth that rivals or surpasses the SEC.

There's not a tougher league to predict this season. Five new head coaches further muddy the water. Significant staff changes had Florida State buzzing in the spring, but will the Seminoles rebound? Will Miami?

Should be fun.

3. PAC-10

Preseason No. 1 USC could carry the rest of the league on its broad shoulders, but doesn't have to.

Cal isn't going away; UCLA has found a defensive identity; and it's likely that Dennis Erickson can turn Arizona State into something better than a decent program that has a decent record and goes to a decent bowl.

The Pac-10 once again will have a thick middle, and six guaranteed bowl slots won't be enough.

4. BIG TEN

The league's top three — Michigan, Wisconsin and Ohio State — all could finish in the Top 10. The regular-season Top 10, that is. Face it: It's hard to glow about the Big Ten with the memory of the last bowl season still fresh.

There was all that howling about how Ohio State and Michigan were the best two teams in the country, and then they were deconstructed by Florida and USC. The perception remains: The Big Ten still needs overall better athleticism.

5. BIG 12

It's still Texas and Oklahoma ... and everyone else. The rebuilding continues. The league was 0-10 last season in non-conference games against teams that finished in the AP Top 25. Times will get better with talented, still-young QBs — Texas' Colt McCoy, Missouri's Chase Daniel, Kansas State's Josh Freeman, Texas A&M's Stephen McGee — boosting the conference.

6. BIG EAST

That talk about the Big East not being worthy of its automatic BCS berth sure died down. West Virginia, Louisville and Rutgers each has what it takes to be back in the national title discussion, and they better watch out for sneaky-good South Florida.

7. MOUNTAIN WEST

Utah, TCU and BYU have won the league with perfect records in the past three seasons, and it should be those three teams battling it out this year. TCU could be this season's Boise State ... except for the fact the Frogs' undefeated dreams likely end at Texas in the second week of the season.

8. CONFERENCE USA

No team in C-USA had fewer than four losses last season, and that team — Houston — loses a four-year starter at QB. There is no great team here, but enough good ones to keep the league rated ahead of the WAC.

9. WAC

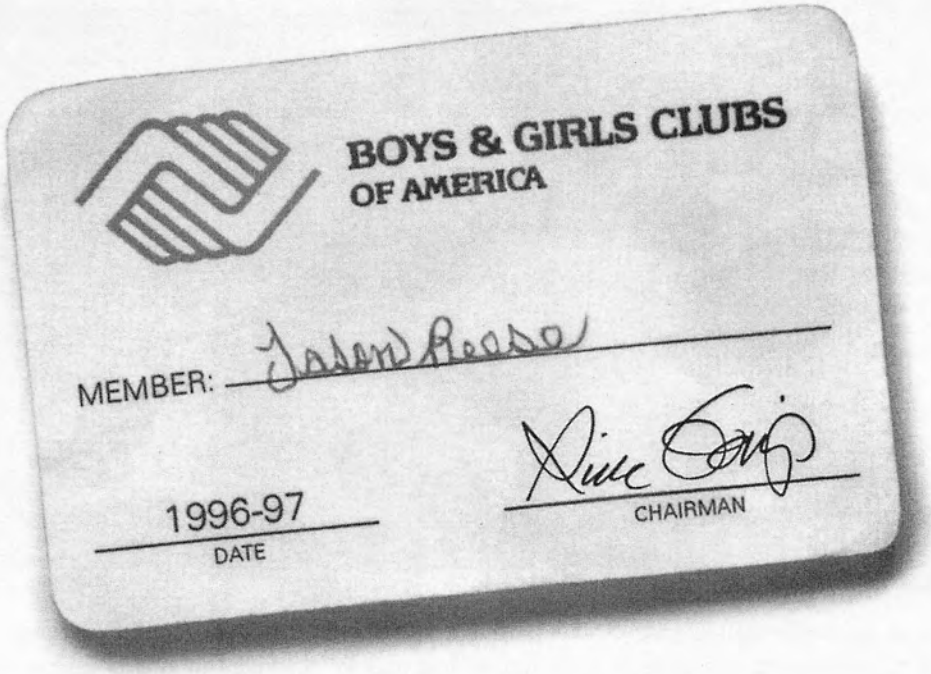
Boise State is the darling of the college football world, and the Broncos won't just fade away. Hawaii could be the BCS party crasher this year. San Jose State has pulled itself up, but the bottom of the league is still iffy, especially with Dennis Erickson's one-and-done act at Idaho.

10. MAC

Only four teams ended with winning records last season, and the addition of Temple doesn't add to the league's profile. Is Central Michigan sophomore Dan LeFevour the MAC's next great quarterback?

11. SUN BELT

The SEC is glad this league is around, as the Sun Belt is providing 13 games (read: victories), for the area big boys this season. Such is life in the Sun Belt, which has to pay the bills.



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Brian Brohm's decision to return to Louisville for his senior season makes him an early favorite for the No. 1 pick in the 2008 NFL Draft.

PHOTO BY RICH KANE/ICON SMI

sneak peak

Here is our annual look at the draft-eligible college players who, a year in advance, are the brightest blips on NFL scouts' radars. Our pals over at NFLdraftscout.com gave us their top seniors and we sprinkled in 10 top juniors (*) for kicks to come up with this nifty 50:

1.	Brian Brohm	QB	Louisville	26.	Steve Slaton*	RB	West Virginia
2.	Darren McFadden*	RB	Arkansas	27.	Antoine Cason	CB	Arizona
3.	Calais Campbell*	DE	Miami	28.	Sedrick Ellis	DT	USC
4.	Jake Long	OT	Michigan	29.	Jonathan Hefney	FS	Tennessee
5.	Glenn Dorsey	DT	LSU	30.	Adarius Bowman	WR	Missouri
6.	Sam Baker	OT	USC	31.	Tyson Jackson*	DE	LSU
7.	Chad Henne	QB	Michigan	32.	Allen Patrick	RB	Oklahoma
8.	Frank Okam	DT	Texas	33.	Bruce Davis	DE	UCLA
9.	Paul Oliver	CB	Georgia	34.	John Carlson	TE	Notre Dame
10.	Dan Connor	LB	Penn State	35.	Andre Caldwell	WR	Florida
11.	Colt Brennan	QB	Hawaii	36.	Darien Williams	FS	Oklahoma
12.	DeSean Jackson*	WR	Cal	37.	Will Arnold	OG	LSU
13.	Keith Rivers	LB	USC	38.	Jordan Grimes	OG	Purdue
14.	Lawrence Jackson	DE	USC	39.	Terrell Thomas	CB	USC
15.	Early Doucet	WR	LSU	40.	Jaison Williams*	WR	Oregon
26.	Mario Manningham*	WR	Michigan	41.	Brian Cushing*	LB	USC
17.	Chris Long	DE	Virginia	42.	Quintin Demps	FS	UTEP
18.	Ryan Clady*	OT	Boise State	43.	Andre Woodson	QB	Kentucky
19.	Kirk Barton	OT	Ohio State	44.	DJ Hall	WR	Alabama
20.	Limas Sweed	WR	Texas	45.	Barry Richardson	OT	Clemson
21.	Mike Hart	RB	Michigan	46.	Branden Ore	RB	Virginia Tech
22.	DeJuan Tribble	DB	Boston College	47.	Jasper Brinkley	LB	South Carolina
23.	Vince Hall	LB	Virginia Tech	48.	Dorien Bryant	WR	Purdue
24.	James Laurinaitis*	LB	Ohio State	49.	Dwight Lowery	CB	San Jose State
25.	Martin Rucker	TE	Missouri	50.	Ali Highsmith	LB	LSU

Sidelines '07

WARM THE CROWD

On cold Saturdays, Stacy Gerschultz and the Ohio State cheerleaders fire up Buckeye faithful. A Speech and Hearing Therapy major, she has been cheerleader captain and will attend graduate school.

SERIOUS BUSINESS

Maryland Dance Team member Kathy Bianco, a junior Business Marketing major, plans for a successful business career. She works with Habitat for Humanity and says that her bad habits include singing in the shower.

PICTURE PERFECT

Painting is a passion for Mindy Holden, a Medford, Oregon native who has been a Duck cheerleader. The sophomore also enjoys running and hiking with her dog.

USC SONG GIRLS

COOKIES 'N CREAM

For UCLA Spirit Squad member, Chelsey (left), a Sociology major from Long Beach, California, her dream vacation would begin in Italy. Her favorite ice cream ... cookies 'n cream.

LIKE FATHER . . .

Duck cheerleader Amanda (above), an Oregon freshman, is daughter of the team's wide receiver coach, Robin Pflugrad. She grew up in Pullman, Washington ... home of the Washington State Cougars.

PONY EXPRESS

Amy Reese, a junior from Lewisville, Texas is a Southern Methodist Mustang cheerleader. The Corporate Communications and Public Affairs major enjoys dancing and traveling.

ALL THAT GLITTERS . . .

. . . is gold in Baton Rouge. LSU Golden Girls, like Lauren Miller (right), help build spirit in Tiger Stadium.

SHINING BRIGHT

A career in the bright lights might be ahead for South Florida Sun Doll, Taylor Shine (right). A Communications Major from Tampa, she enjoys working out and shopping, and wants to work in broadcasting on television.

NAME BRAND

It's certainly easy to notice Tracy Branding (below) of the Vanderbilt danceline. An Arts and Sciences student, she is from Libertyville, Illinois and has been a mission team member to Puerto Rico.

ON WITH THE SHOW

Texas Christian Showgirl Lauren Venuto is a freshman from Omaha, Nebraska. She is a Modern Dance major and a member of Kappa Alpha Theta sorority.

THE LOW DOWN

Washington Husky fans are hoping for a return to the glory days near the top of Pac-10 football. Cheerleader Michelle Low (right) will do her part to cheer them on.

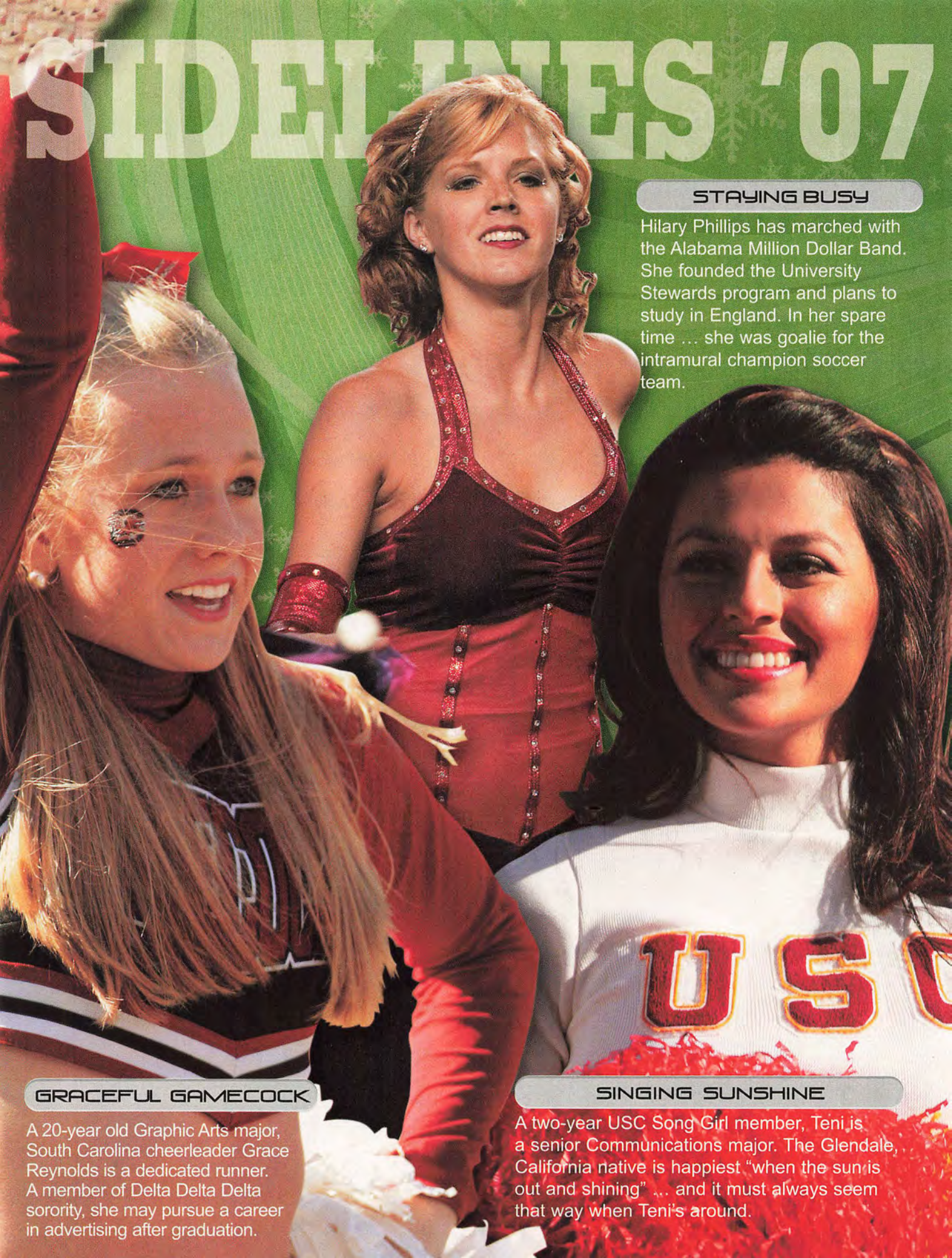
REMEMBER (THE) ALAMO

Alamo, California is hometown for Katie, a UCLA Spirit Squad member. A World Arts and Culture major, she enjoys most kinds of music and wants to travel to Costa Rica.

COWPOKE PASSION

Sarah Doughty's passion for Oklahoma State comes naturally. The two-year Cowboy cheerleader is from Stillwater, Oklahoma and majors in Marketing. She recently won the OSU Golden Spirit Award.

SIDELINES '07



STAYING BUSY

Hilary Phillips has marched with the Alabama Million Dollar Band. She founded the University Stewards program and plans to study in England. In her spare time … she was goalie for the intramural champion soccer team.

GRACEFUL GAMECOCK

A 20-year old Graphic Arts major, South Carolina cheerleader Grace Reynolds is a dedicated runner. A member of Delta Delta Delta sorority, she may pursue a career in advertising after graduation.

SINGING SUNSHINE

A two-year USC Song Girl member, Teni is a senior Communications major. The Glendale, California native is happiest "when the sun is out and shining" … and it must always seem that way when Teni's around.

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ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 1 WAKE FOREST
Sept. 8 N.C. STATE
Sept. 15 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 22 ARMY
Sept. 29 MASSACHUSETTS
Oct. 6 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 13 at Notre Dame
Oct. 25 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 3 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 10 at Maryland
Nov. 17 at Clemson
Nov. 24 MIAMI (FL)

CLEMSON
Sept. 3 FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 8 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 15 FURMAN
Sept. 22 at N.C. State
Sept. 29 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 6 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 20 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 27 at Maryland
Nov. 3 at Duke
Nov. 10 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 17 BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 24 at South Carolina

DUKE
Sept. 1 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 8 at Virginia
Sept. 15 at Northwestern
Sept. 22 at Navy
Sept. 29 at Miami (FL)
Oct. 6 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 13 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 27 at Florida State
Nov. 3 CLEMSON
Nov. 10 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 17 at Notre Dame
Nov. 24 at North Carolina

FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 3 at Clemson
Sept. 8 UAB
Sept. 15 at Colorado
Sept. 29 vs. Alabama (Jacksonville)
Oct. 6 N.C. STATE
Oct. 11 at Wake Forest
Oct. 20 MIAMI (FL)
Oct. 27 DUKE
Nov. 3 at Boston College
Nov. 10 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 17 MARYLAND
Nov. 24 at Florida

GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 1 at Notre Dame
Sept. 8 SAMFORD
Sept. 15 BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 22 at Virginia
Sept. 29 CLEMSON
Oct. 6 at Maryland
Oct. 13 at Miami (FL)
Oct. 20 ARMY
Nov. 1 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 10 at Duke
Nov. 17 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 24 GEORGIA

MARYLAND
Sept. 1 VILLANOVA
Sept. 8 at Florida International
Sept. 13 WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 22 at Wake Forest
Sept. 29 at Rutgers
Oct. 6 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 20 VIRGINIA
Oct. 27 CLEMSON
Nov. 3 at North Carolina
Nov. 10 BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 17 at Florida State
Nov. 24 at N.C. State

MIAMI (FL)
Sept. 1 MARSHALL
Sept. 8 at Oklahoma
Sept. 15 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 20 TEXAS A&M
Sept. 29 DUKE
Oct. 6 at North Carolina
Oct. 13 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 20 at Florida State
Nov. 3 N.C. STATE
Nov. 10 VIRGINIA
Nov. 17 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 24 at Boston College

NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 1 JAMES MADISON
Sept. 8 at East Carolina
Sept. 15 VIRGINIA
Sept. 22 at South Florida
Sept. 29 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 6 MIAMI (FL)
Oct. 13 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27 at Wake Forest
Nov. 3 MARYLAND
Nov. 10 at N.C. State
Nov. 17 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 24 DUKE

NORTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 1 UCF
Sept. 8 at Boston College
Sept. 15 WOFFORD
Sept. 22 CLEMSON
Sept. 29 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 6 at Florida State
Oct. 20 at East Carolina
Oct. 27 VIRGINIA
Nov. 3 at Miami (FL)
Nov. 10 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 17 at Wake Forest
Nov. 24 MARYLAND

VIRGINIA
Sept. 1 at Wyoming
Sept. 8 DUKE
Sept. 15 at North Carolina
Sept. 22 GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 29 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 6 at Middle Tennessee State
Oct. 13 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 20 at Maryland
Oct. 27 at N.C. State
Nov. 3 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 10 at Miami (FL)
Nov. 24 VIRGINIA TECH

VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 1 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 8 at LSU
Sept 15 OHIO
Sept. 22 WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 29 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 6 at Clemson
Oct. 13 at Duke
Oct. 25 BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 1 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 10 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 17 MIAMI (FL)
Nov. 24 at Virginia

WAKE FOREST
Sept. 1 at Boston College
Sept. 8 NEBRASKA
Sept. 15 ARMY
Sept. 22 MARYLAND
Oct. 6 at Duke
Oct. 11 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 20 at Navy
Oct. 27 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 3 at Virginia
Nov. 10 at Clemson
Nov. 17 N.C. STATE
Nov. 24 at Vanderbilt

BIG EAST

CINCINNATI
Aug. 30 SOUTHEAST MISSOURI ST.
Sept. 6 OREGON STATE
Sept. 15 at Miami (OH)
Sept 22 MARSHALL
Sept. 29 at San Diego State
Oct. 6 at Rutgers
Oct. 13 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 20 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 3 at South Florida
Nov. 10 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 17 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 24 at Syracuse

CONNECTICUT
Sept. 1 at Duke
Sept. 8 MAINE
Sept. 15 TEMPLE
Sept. 22 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 29 AKRON
Oct. 13 at Virginia
Oct. 19 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 27 SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 3 RUTGERS
Nov. 10 at Cincinnati
Nov. 17 SYRACUSE
Dec. 24 at West Virginia

LOUISVILLE
Aug. 30 MURRAY STATE
Sept. 6 MIDDLE TENNESSEE ST.
Sept. 15 at Kentucky
Sept. 22 SYRACUSE
Sept. 29 at N.C. State
Oct. 5 UTAH
Oct. 13 at Cincinnati
Oct. 19 at Connecticut
Oct. 27 PITTSBURGH
Nov. 8 at West Virginia
Nov. 17 at South Florida
Nov. 29 RUTGERS

PITTSBURGH
Sept. 1 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8 GRAMBLING STATE
Sept. 15 at Michigan State
Sept. 22 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 29 at Virginia
Oct. 13 NAVY
Oct. 20 CINCINNATI
Oct. 27 at Louisville
Nov. 03 SYRACUSE
Nov. 17 at Rutgers
Nov. 24 SOUTH FLORIDA
Dec. 1 at West Virginia

RUTGERS
Aug. 30 BUFFALO
Sept. 7 NAVY
Sept. 15 NORFOLK STATE
Sept. 29 MARYLAND
Oct. 6 CINCINNATI
Oct. 13 at Syracuse
Oct. 18 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 27 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 3 at Connecticut
Nov. 9 at Army
Nov. 17 PITTSBURGH
Nov. 29 at Louisville

SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 1 ELON
Sept. 8 at Auburn
Sept. 22 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 28 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 6 at Florida Atlantic
Oct. 13 UCF
Oct. 18 at Rutgers
Oct. 27 at Connecticut
Nov. 3 CINCINNATI
Nov. 10 at Syracuse
Nov. 17 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 24 at Pittsburgh

SYRACUSE
Aug. 31 WASHINGTON
Sept. 8 at Iowa
Sept. 15 ILLINOIS
Sept. 22 at Louisville
Sept. 29 at Miami (OH)
Oct. 6 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 13 RUTGERS
Oct. 20 BUFFALO
Nov. 3 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 10 SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 17 at Connecticut
Nov. 24 CINCINNATI

WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 1 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8 at Marshall
Sept. 13 at Maryland
Sept. 22 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 28 at South Florida
Oct. 6 at Syracuse
Oct. 20 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 27 at Rutgers
Nov. 8 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 17 at Cincinnati
Nov. 24 CONNECTICUT
Dec. 1 PITTSBURGH

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS
Sept. 1 vs. Missouri (St. Louis)
Sept. 8 WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 at Syracuse
Sept. 22 at Indiana
Sept. 29 PENN STATE
Oct. 6 WISCONSIN
Oct. 13 at Iowa
Oct. 20 MICHIGAN
Oct. 27 BALL STATE
Nov. 3 at Minnesota
Nov. 10 at Ohio State
Nov. 17 NORTHWESTERN

INDIANA
Sept. 1 INDIANA STATE
Sept. 8 at Western Michigan
Sept. 15 AKRON
Sept. 22 ILLINOIS
Sept. 29 at Iowa
Oct. 6 MINNESOTA
Oct. 13 at Michigan State
Oct. 20 PENN STATE
Oct. 27 at Wisconsin
Nov. 3 BALL STATE
Nov. 10 at Northwestern
Nov. 17 PURDUE

IOWA
Sept. 1 vs. Northern Illinois (Chicago)
Sept. 8 SYRACUSE
Sept. 15 at Iowa State
Sept. 22 at Wisconsin
Sept. 29 INDIANA
Oct. 6 at Penn State
Oct. 13 ILLINOIS
Oct. 20 at Purdue
Oct. 27 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 3 at Northwestern
Nov. 10 MINNESOTA
Nov. 17 WESTERN MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN
Sept. 1 APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 8 OREGON
Sept. 15 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 22 PENN STATE
Sept. 29 at Northwestern
Oct. 6 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 13 PURDUE
Oct. 20 at Illinois
Oct. 27 MINNESOTA
Nov. 3 at Michigan State
Nov. 10 at Wisconsin
Nov. 17 OHIO STATE

MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 1 UAB
Sept. 8 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 15 PITTSBURGH
Sept. 22 at Notre Dame
Sept. 29 at Wisconsin
Oct. 6 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 13 INDIANA
Oct. 20 at Ohio State
Oct. 27 at Iowa
Nov. 3 MICHIGAN
Nov. 10 at Purdue
Nov. 17 PENN STATE

MINNESOTA
Sept. 1 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 8 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 15 vs. Florida Atlantic (Miami)
Sept. 22 PURDUE
Sept. 29 OHIO STATE
Oct. 6 at Indiana
Oct. 13 at Northwestern
Oct. 20 NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Oct. 27 at Michigan
Nov. 3 ILLINOIS
Nov. 10 at Iowa
Nov. 17 WISCONSIN

NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 1 NORTHEASTERN
Sept. 8 NEVADA
Sept. 15 DUKE
Sept. 22 at Ohio State
Sept. 29 MICHIGAN
Oct. 6 at Michigan State
Oct. 13 MINNESOTA
Oct. 20 vs. Eastern Michigan (Detroit)
Oct. 27 at Purdue
Nov. 3 IOWA
Nov. 10 INDIANA
Nov. 17 at Illinois

OHIO STATE
Sept. 1 YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 8 AKRON
Sept. 15 at Washington
Sept. 22 NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 29 at Minnesota
Oct. 6 at Purdue
Oct. 13 KENT STATE
Oct. 20 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 27 at Penn State
Nov. 3 WISCONSIN
Nov. 10 ILLINOIS
Nov. 17 at Michigan

PENN STATE
Sept. 1 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 8 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 15 BUFFALO
Sept. 22 at Michigan
Sept. 29 at Illinois
Oct. 6 IOWA
Oct. 13 WISCONSIN
Oct. 20 at Indiana
Oct. 27 OHIO STATE
Nov. 3 PURDUE
Nov. 10 at Temple
Nov. 17 at Michigan State

PURDUE
Sept. 1 at Toledo
Sept. 8 EASTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 22 at Minnesota
Sept. 29 NOTRE DAME
Oct. 6 OHIO STATE
Oct. 13 at Michigan
Oct. 20 IOWA
Oct. 27 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 3 at Penn State
Nov. 10 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 17 at Indiana

WISCONSIN
Sept. 1 WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 8 at UNLV
Sept. 15 THE CITADEL
Sept. 22 IOWA
Sept. 29 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 6 at Illinois
Oct. 13 at Penn State
Oct. 20 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 27 INDIANA
Nov. 3 at Ohio State
Nov. 10 MICHIGAN
Nov. 17 at Minnesota

BIG 12

BAYLOR
Sept. 1 at TCU
Sept. 8 RICE
Sept. 15 TEXAS STATE
Sept. 22 at Buffalo
Sept. 29 at Texas A&M
Oct. 6 COLORADO
Oct. 13 at Kansas
Oct. 20 TEXAS
Oct. 27 at Kansas State
Nov. 3 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 10 at Oklahoma
Nov. 17 OKLAHOMA STATE

COLORADO
Sept. 1 vs. Colorado State (Denver)
Sept. 9 at Arizona State
Sept. 15 FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 22 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 29 OKLAHOMA
Oct. 6 at Baylor
Oct. 13 at Kansas State
Oct. 20 KANSAS
Oct. 27 at Texas Tech
Nov. 3 MISSOURI
Nov. 10 at Iowa State
Nov. 23 NEBRASKA

IOWA STATE
Aug. 30 KENT STATE
Sept. 8 NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 15 IOWA
Sept. 22 at Toledo
Sept. 29 at Nebraska
Oct. 6 at Texas Tech
Oct. 13 TEXAS
Oct. 20 OKLAHOMA
Oct. 27 at Missouri
Nov. 3 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 10 COLORADO
Nov. 17 at Kansas

KANSAS
Sept. 1 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 8 SE LOUISIANA
Sept. 15 TOLEDO
Sept. 22 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 6 at Kansas State
Oct. 13 BAYLOR
Oct. 20 at Colorado
Oct. 27 at Texas A&M
Nov. 3 NEBRASKA
Nov. 10 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 17 IOWA STATE
Nov. 24 vs. Missouri (Kansas City)

KANSAS STATE
Sept. 1 at Auburn
Sept. 8 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 15 MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 29 at Texas
Oct. 6 KANSAS
Oct. 13 COLORADO
Oct. 20 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 27 BAYLOR
Nov. 3 at Iowa State
Nov. 10 at Nebraska
Nov. 17 MISSOURI
Nov. 24 at Fresno State

MISSOURI
Sept. 1 vs. Illinois (St. Louis)
Sept. 8 at Ole Miss
Sept. 15 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 22 ILLINOIS STATE
Oct. 6 NEBRASKA
Oct. 13 at Oklahoma
Oct. 20 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 27 IOWA STATE
Nov. 3 at Colorado
Nov. 10 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 17 at Kansas State
Nov. 24 vs. Kansas (Kansas City)

NEBRASKA
Sept. 1 NEVADA
Sept. 8 at Wake Forest
Sept. 15 USC
Sept. 22 BALL STATE
Sept. 29 IOWA STATE
Oct. 6 at Missouri
Oct. 13 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 20 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 27 at Texas
Nov. 3 at Kansas
Nov. 10 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 23 at Colorado

OKLAHOMA
Sept. 1 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 8 MIAMI (FL)
Sept. 15 UTAH STATE
Sept. 21 at Tulsa
Sept. 29 at Colorado
Oct. 6 vs. Texas (Dallas)
Oct. 13 MISSOURI
Oct. 20 at Iowa State
Nov. 3 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 10 BAYLOR
Nov. 17 at Texas Tech
Nov. 24 OKLAHOMA STATE

OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 1 at Georgia
Sept. 8 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 14 at Troy
Sept. 22 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 29 SAM HOUSTON STATE
Oct. 6 at Texas A&M
Oct. 13 at Nebraska
Oct. 20 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 3 TEXAS
Nov. 10 KANSAS
Nov. 17 at Baylor
Nov. 24 at Oklahoma

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

Wrangler

TEXAS
Sept. 1 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 8 TCU
Sept. 15 at UCF
Sept. 22 RICE
Sept. 29 KANSAS STATE
Oct. 6 vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)
Oct. 13 at Iowa State
Oct. 20 at Baylor
Oct. 27 NEBRASKA
Nov. 3 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 10 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 23 at Texas A&M

TEXAS A&M
Sept. 1 MONTANA STATE
Sept. 8 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 15 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 20 at Miami (FL)
Sept. 29 BAYLOR
Oct. 6 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 13 at Texas Tech
Oct. 20 at Nebraska
Oct. 27 KANSAS
Nov. 3 at Oklahoma
Nov. 10 at Missouri
Nov. 23 TEXAS

TEXAS TECH
Sept. 3 at SMU
Sept. 8 UTEP
Sept. 15 at Rice
Sept. 22 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 29 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Oct. 6 IOWA STATE
Oct. 13 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 20 at Missouri
Oct. 27 COLORADO
Nov. 3 at Baylor
Nov. 10 at Texas
Nov. 17 OKLAHOMA

C-USA

EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 1 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 8 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 15 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 22 at West Virginia
Sept. 29 at Houston
Oct. 6 UCF
Oct. 13 at UTEP
Oct. 20 N.C. STATE
Oct. 27 UAB
Nov. 3 at Memphis
Nov. 10 at Marshall
Nov. 24 TULANE

HOUSTON
Sept. 1 at Oregon
Sept. 15 at Tulane
Sept. 22 COLORADO STATE
Sept. 29 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 6 at Alabama
Oct. 13 RICE
Oct. 20 at UAB
Oct. 27 at UTEP
Nov. 4 SMU
Nov. 10 at Tulsa
Nov. 17 MARSHALL
Nov. 24 TEXAS SOUTHERN

MARSHALL
Sept. 1 at Miami (FL)
Sept. 8 WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 15 NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 22 at Cincinnati
Oct. 2 at Memphis
Oct. 13 at Tulsa
Oct. 21 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 27 RICE
Nov. 3 at UCF
Nov. 10 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 17 at Houston
Nov. 24 UAB

MEMPHIS
Sept. 1 OLE MISS
Sept. 8 at Arkansas State
Sept. 15 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 22 at UCF
Oct. 2 MARSHALL
Oct. 13 MIDDLE TENNESSEE ST.
Oct. 20 at Rice
Oct. 27 at Tulane
Nov. 3 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 10 at Southern Miss
Nov. 17 UAB
Nov. 24 SMU

RICE
Sept. 1 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 8 at Baylor
Sept. 15 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 22 at Texas
Oct. 3 at Southern Miss
Oct. 13 at Houston
Oct. 20 MEMPHIS
Oct. 27 at Marshall
Nov. 3 UTEP
Nov. 10 at SMU
Nov. 17 TULANE
Nov. 24 TULSA

SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 1 TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 8 at Tennessee
Sept. 15 at East Carolina
Sept. 22 at Boise State
Oct. 3 RICE
Oct. 13 SMU
Oct. 21 at Marshall
Oct. 28 UCF
Nov. 3 at UAB
Nov. 10 MEMPHIS
Nov. 17 at UTEP
Nov. 24 ARKANSAS STATE

SMU
Sept. 3 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 8 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 15 at Arkansas State
Sept. 22 at TCU
Sept. 29 UTEP
Oct. 13 at Southern Miss
Oct. 20 TULANE
Oct. 27 at Tulsa
Nov. 4 at Houston
Nov. 10 RICE
Nov. 17 UCF
Nov. 24 at Memphis

TULANE
Sept. 8 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 15 HOUSTON
Sept. 22 SE LOUISIANA
Sept. 29 LSU
Oct. 6 at Army
Oct. 13 at UAB
Oct. 20 at SMU
Oct. 27 MEMPHIS
Nov. 3 TULSA
Nov. 10 UTEP
Nov. 17 at Rice
Nov. 24 at East Carolina

TULSA
Aug. 30 at Louisiana-Monroe
Sept. 15 BYU
Sept. 21 OKLAHOMA
Sept. 29 UAB
Oct. 6 at UTEP
Oct. 13 MARSHALL
Oct. 20 at UCF
Oct. 27 SMU
Nov. 3 at Tulane
Nov. 10 HOUSTON
Nov. 17 at Army
Nov. 24 at Rice

UAB
Sept. 1 at Michigan State
Sept. 8 at Florida State
Sept. 15 ALCORN STATE
Sept. 29 at Tulsa
Oct. 6 at Mississippi State
Oct. 13 TULANE
Oct. 20 HOUSTON
Oct. 27 at East Carolina
Nov. 3 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 10 UCF
Nov. 17 at Memphis
Nov. 24 at Marshall

UCF
Sept. 1 at N.C. State
Sept. 15 TEXAS
Sept. 22 MEMPHIS
Sept. 29 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Oct. 6 at East Carolina
Oct. 13 at South Florida
Oct. 20 TULSA
Oct. 28 at Southern Miss
Nov. 3 MARSHALL
Nov. 10 at UAB
Nov. 17 at SMU
Nov. 24 UTEP

UTEP
Sept. 1 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 8 at Texas Tech
Sept. 15 at New Mexico State
Sept. 22 TEXAS SOUTHERN
Sept. 29 at SMU
Oct. 6 TULSA
Oct. 13 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 27 HOUSTON
Nov. 3 at Rice
Nov. 10 at Tulane
Nov. 17 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 24 at UCF

I-A INDEPENDENTS

ARMY
Sept. 1 at Akron
Sept. 8 RHODE ISLAND
Sept. 15 at Wake Forest
Sept. 22 at Boston College
Sept. 29 TEMPLE
Oct. 6 TULANE
Oct. 13 at Central Michigan
Oct. 20 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 3 at Air Force
Nov. 9 RUTGERS
Nov. 17 TULSA
Dec. 1 vs. Navy (Baltimore, MD)

NAVY
Aug. 30 at Temple
Sept. 7 at Rutgers
Sept. 15 BALL STATE
Sept. 22 DUKE
Sept. 29 AIR FORCE
Oct. 13 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 20 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 27 DELAWARE
Nov. 3 at Notre Dame
Nov. 10 at North Texas
Nov. 17 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Dec. 1 vs. ARMY (Baltimore, MD)

NOTRE DAME
Sept. 1 GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 8 at Penn State
Sept. 15 at Michigan
Sept. 22 MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 29 at Purdue
Oct. 6 at UCLA
Oct. 13 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 20 USC
Nov. 3 NAVY
Nov. 10 AIR FORCE
Nov. 17 DUKE
Nov. 24 at Stanford

MAC

AKRON
Sept. 1 vs. Army (Cleveland)
Sept. 8 at Ohio State
Sept. 15 at Indiana
Sept. 22 KENT STATE
Sept. 29 at Connecticut
Oct. 6 at Western Michigan
Oct. 13 TEMPLE
Oct. 27 at Buffalo
Nov. 2 at Bowling Green
Nov. 7 OHIO
Nov. 14 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 23 CENTRAL MICHIGAN

BALL STATE
Aug. 30 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 8 at Eastern Michigan
Sept. 15 at Navy
Sept. 22 at Nebraska
Sept. 29 BUFFALO
Oct. 6 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 13 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 20 at Western Michigan
Oct. 27 at Illinois
Nov. 3 at Indiana
Nov. 13 TOLEDO
Nov. 24 at Northern Illinois

BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 1 at Minnesota
Sept. 8 at Michigan State
Sept. 22 TEMPLE
Sept. 29 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 6 at Boston College
Oct. 13 at Miami (OH)
Oct. 20 at Kent State
Oct. 27 OHIO
Nov. 2 AKRON
Nov. 9 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 17 at Buffalo
Nov. 23 TOLEDO

BUFFALO
Aug. 30 at Rutgers
Sept. 8 at Temple
Sept. 15 at Penn State
Sept. 22 BAYLOR
Sept. 29 at Ball State
Oct. 6 OHIO
Oct. 13 TOLEDO
Oct. 20 at Syracuse
Oct. 27 AKRON
Nov. 3 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 17 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 24 at Kent State

CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Aug. 1 at Kansas
Sept. 8 TOLEDO
Sept. 15 at Purdue
Sept. 22 NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 29 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 6 at Ball State
Oct. 13 ARMY
Oct. 20 at Clemson
Oct. 27 at Kent State
Nov. 6 at Western Michigan
Nov. 17 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 23 at Akron

EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 1 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 8 BALL STATE
Sept. 15 at Northern Illinois
Sept. 22 HOWARD
Sept. 29 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 6 at Michigan
Oct. 13 at Ohio
Oct. 20 vs. Northwestern (Detroit)
Oct. 27 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 3 at Toledo
Nov. 9 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 17 at Central Michigan

KENT STATE
Aug. 30 at Iowa State
Sept. 8 at Kentucky
Sept. 15 DELAWARE STATE
Sept. 22 at Akron
Sept. 29 at Ohio
Oct. 6 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 13 at Ohio State
Oct. 20 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 27 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 10 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 17 at Temple
Nov. 24 BUFFALO

MIAMI (OH)
Aug. 30 at Ball State
Sept. 8 at Minnesota
Sept. 15 CINCINNATI
Sept. 22 at Colorado
Sept. 29 SYRACUSE
Oct. 6 at Kent State
Oct. 13 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 20 at Temple
Oct. 27 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 3 BUFFALO
Nov. 14 AKRON
Nov. 24 at Ohio

NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 1 vs. Iowa (Chicago)
Sept. 8 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 22 at Idaho
Sept. 29 at Central Michigan
Oct. 6 at Temple
Oct. 13 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 20 at Wisconsin
Oct. 27 at Toledo
Nov. 10 KENT STATE
Nov. 17 at Navy
Nov. 24 BALL STATE

OHIO
Sept. 1 GARDNER-WEBB
Sept. 8 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 15 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 22 WYOMING
Sept. 29 KENT STATE
Oct. 6 at Buffalo
Oct. 13 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 20 at Toledo
Oct. 27 at Bowling Green
Nov. 2 TEMPLE
Nov. 7 at Akron
Nov. 24 MIAMI (OH)

TEMPLE
Aug. 30 NAVY
Sept. 8 BUFFALO
Sept. 15 at Connecticut
Sept. 22 at Bowling Green
Sept. 29 at Army
Oct. 6 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 13 at Akron
Oct. 20 MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 2 at Ohio
Nov. 10 PENN STATE
Nov. 17 KENT STATE
Nov. 24 at Western Michigan

TOLEDO
Sept. 1 PURDUE
Sept. 8 at Central Michigan
Sept. 15 at Kansas
Sept. 22 IOWA STATE
Sept. 29 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 6 LIBERTY
Oct. 13 at Buffalo
Oct. 20 OHIO
Oct. 27 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 3 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 13 at Ball State
Nov. 23 at Bowling Green

WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 1 at West Virginia
Sept. 8 INDIANA
Sept. 15 at Missouri
Sept. 22 Central Connecticut State
Sept. 29 at Toledo
Oct. 6 AKRON
Oct. 13 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 20 BALL STATE
Oct. 27 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 6 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 17 at Iowa
Nov. 24 TEMPLE

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE
Sept. 1 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 8 at Utah
Sept. 13 TCU
Sept. 22 at BYU
Sept. 29 at Navy
Oct. 6 UNLV
Oct. 13 at Colorado State
Oct. 20 WYOMING
Oct. 25 at New Mexico
Nov. 3 ARMY
Nov. 10 at Notre Dame
Nov. 17 SAN DIEGO STATE

BYU
Sept. 1 ARIZONA
Sept. 8 at UCLA
Sept. 15 at Tulsa
Sept. 22 AIR FORCE
Sept. 29 at New Mexico
Oct. 13 at UNLV
Oct. 20 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Oct. 27 at San Diego State
Nov. 3 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 8 TCU
Nov. 17 at Wyoming
Nov. 24 UTAH

COLORADO STATE
Sept. 1 vs. Colorado (Denver)
Sept. 8 CALIFORNIA
Sept. 22 at Houston
Sept. 29 at TCU
Oct. 6 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 13 AIR FORCE
Oct. 20 at UNLV
Oct. 27 UTAH
Nov. 3 at BYU
Nov. 10 at New Mexico
Nov. 17 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 23 WYOMING

NEW MEXICO
Sept. 1 at UTEP
Sept. 8 NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 15 at Arizona
Sept. 22 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 29 BYU
Oct. 13 at Wyoming
Oct. 20 at San Diego State
Oct. 25 AIR FORCE
Nov. 3 at TCU
Nov. 10 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 17 at Utah
Nov. 24 UNLV

SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 8 vs. Washington St. (Seattle)
Sept. 15 at Arizona State
Sept. 22 PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 29 CINCINNATI
Oct. 6 at Colorado State
Oct. 13 at Utah
Oct. 20 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27 BYU
Nov. 3 WYOMING
Nov. 10 at UNLV
Nov. 17 at Air Force
Nov. 24 TCU

TCU
Sept. 1 BAYLOR
Sept. 8 at Texas
Sept. 13 at Air Force
Sept. 22 SMU
Sept. 29 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 6 at Wyoming
Oct. 13 at Stanford
Oct. 18 UTAH
Nov. 3 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 8 at BYU
Nov. 17 UNLV
Nov. 24 at San Diego State

UNLV
Aug. 30 at Utah State
Sept. 8 WISCONSIN
Sept. 15 HAWAII
Sept. 22 UTAH
Sept. 29 at Nevada
Oct. 6 at Air Force
Oct. 13 BYU
Oct. 20 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 27 at Wyoming
Nov. 10 SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 17 at TCU
Nov. 24 at New Mexico

UTAH
Aug. 30 at Oregon State
Sept. 8 AIR FORCE
Sept. 15 UCLA
Sept. 22 at UNLV
Sept. 29 UTAH STATE
Oct. 5 at Louisville
Oct. 13 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 18 at TCU
Oct. 27 at Colorado State
Nov. 10 WYOMING
Nov. 17 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 24 at BYU

WYOMING
Sept. 1 VIRGINIA
Sept. 8 UTAH STATE
Sept. 15 at Boise State
Sept. 22 at Ohio

Wrangler

Oct. 6 TCU
Oct. 13 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 20 at Air Force
Oct. 27 UNLV
Nov. 3 at San Diego State
Nov. 10 at Utah
Nov. 17 BYU
Nov. 23 at Colorado State

PAC-10

ARIZONA
Sept. 1 at BYU
Sept. 8 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 15 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 22 at California
Sept. 29 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 6 at Oregon State
Oct. 13 at USC
Oct. 20 STANFORD
Oct. 27 at Washington
Nov. 3 UCLA
Nov. 15 OREGON
Dec. 1 at Arizona State

ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 1 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 8 COLORADO
Sept. 15 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 22 OREGON STATE
Sept. 29 at Stanford
Oct. 6 at Washington State
Oct. 13 WASHINGTON
Oct. 27 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 3 at Oregon
Nov. 10 at UCLA
Nov. 22 USC
Dec. 1 ARIZONA

CALIFORNIA
Sept. 1 TENNESSEE
Sept. 8 at Colorado State
Sept. 15 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 22 ARIZONA
Sept. 29 at Oregon
Oct. 13 OREGON STATE
Oct. 20 at UCLA
Oct. 27 at Arizona State
Nov 3 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 10 USC
Nov. 17 at Washington
Dec. 1 at Stanford

OREGON
Sept. 1 HOUSTON
Sept. 8 at Michigan
Sept. 15 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 22 at Stanford
Sept. 29 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 13 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 20 at Washington
Oct. 27 USC
Nov. 3 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 15 at Arizona
Nov. 24 at UCLA
Dec. 1 OREGON STATE

OREGON STATE
Aug. 30 UTAH
Sept. 6 at Cincinnati
Sept. 15 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 22 at Arizona State
Sept. 29 UCLA
Oct. 6 ARIZONA
Oct. 13 at California
Oct. 27 STANFORD
Nov. 3 at USC
Nov. 10 WASHINGTON
Nov. 17 at Washington State
Dec. 1 at Oregon

STANFORD
Sept. 1 UCLA
Sept. 15 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 22 OREGON
Sept. 29 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 6 at USC
Oct. 13 TCU
Oct. 20 at Arizona
Oct. 27 at Oregon State
Nov. 3 Washington
Nov. 10 at Washington State
Nov. 24 NOTRE DAME
Dec. 1 CALIFORNIA

UCLA
Sept. 1 at Stanford
Sept. 8 BYU
Sept. 15 at Utah
Sept. 22 WASHINGTON
Sept. 29 at Oregon State
Oct. 6 NOTRE DAME
Oct. 20 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 27 at Washington State
Nov. 3 at Arizona
Nov. 10 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 24 OREGON
Dec. 1 at USC

USC
Sept. 1 IDAHO
Sept. 15 at Nebraska
Sept. 22 WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 29 at WASHINGTON
Oct. 6 STANFORD
Oct. 13 ARIZONA
Oct. 20 at Notre Dame
Oct. 27 at Oregon
Nov. 3 OREGON STATE
Nov. 10 at California
Nov. 22 at Arizona State
Dec. 1 UCLA

WASHINGTON
Aug. 31 at Syracuse
Sept. 8 BOISE STATE
Sept. 15 OHIO STATE
Sept. 22 at UCLA
Sept. 29 USC
Oct. 13 at Arizona State
Oct. 20 OREGON
Oct. 27 ARIZONA
Nov. 3 at Stanford
Nov. 10 at Oregon State
Nov. 17 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 24 WASHINGTON STATE
Dec. 1 at Hawaii

WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 1 at Wisconsin
Sept. 8 vs. San Diego St. (Seattle)
Sept. 15 IDAHO
Sept. 22 at USC
Sept. 29 at Arizona
Oct. 6 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 13 at Oregon
Oct. 27 UCLA
Nov. 3 at California
Nov. 10 STANFORD
Nov. 17 OREGON STATE
Nov. 24 at Washington

SEC

ALABAMA
Sept. 1 WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 8 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 15 ARKANSAS
Sept. 22 GEORGIA
Sept. 29 vs. Florida St. (Jacksonville)
Oct. 6 HOUSTON
Oct. 13 at Ole Miss
Oct. 20 TENNESSEE
Nov. 3 LSU
Nov. 10 at Mississippi State
Nov. 17 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 24 at Auburn

ARKANSAS
Sept. 1 TROY
Sept. 15 at ALABAMA
Sept. 22 KENTUCKY
Sept. 29 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 6 at Tennessee-Chattanooga
Oct. 13 AUBURN
Oct. 20 at Ole Miss
Oct. 27 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Nov. 3 SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 10 at Tennessee
Nov. 17 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 23 at LSU

AUBURN
Sept. 1 KANSAS STATE
Sept. 8 SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 15 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 22 NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 29 at Florida
Oct. 6 VANDERBILT
Oct. 13 at Arkansas
Oct. 20 at LSU
Oct. 27 OLE MISS
Nov. 3 TENNESSEE TECH
Nov. 10 at Georgia
Nov. 24 ALABAMA

FLORIDA
Sept. 1 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 8 TROY
Sept. 15 TENNESSEE
Sept. 22 at Ole Miss
Sept. 29 AUBURN
Oct. 6 at LSU
Oct. 20 at Kentucky
Oct. 27 vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3 VANDERBILT
Nov. 10 at South Carolina
Nov. 17 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 24 FLORIDA STATE

GEORGIA
Sept. 1 OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 8 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 15 WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 22 at Alabama
Sept. 29 OLE MISS
Oct. 6 at Tennessee
Oct. 13 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 27 vs. Florida (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3 TROY
Nov. 10 AUBURN
Nov. 17 KENTUCKY
Nov. 24 at Georgia Tech

KENTUCKY
Sept. 1 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 8 KENT STATE
Sept. 15 LOUISVILLE
Sept. 22 at Arkansas
Sept. 29 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Oct. 4 at South Carolina
Oct. 13 LSU
Oct. 20 FLORIDA
Oct. 27 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 10 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 17 at Georgia
Nov. 24 TENNESSEE

LSU
Aug. 30 at Mississippi State
Sept. 8 VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 15 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 22 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 29 at Tulane
Oct. 6 FLORIDA
Oct. 13 at Kentucky
Oct. 20 AUBURN
Nov. 3 at Alabama
Nov. 10 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 17 at Ole Miss
Nov. 23 ARKANSAS

OLE MISS
Sept. 1 at Memphis
Sept. 8 MISSOURI
Sept. 15 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 22 FLORIDA
Sept. 29 at Georgia
Oct. 6 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 13 ALABAMA
Oct. 20 ARKANSAS
Oct. 27 at Auburn
Nov. 3 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Nov. 17 LSU
Nov. 23 at Mississippi State

MISSISSIPPI STATE
Aug. 30 LSU
Sept. 8 at Tulane
Sept. 15 at Auburn
Sept. 22 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 29 at South Carolina
Oct. 6 UAB
Oct. 13 TENNESSEE
Oct. 20 at West Virginia
Oct. 27 at Kentucky
Nov. 10 ALABAMA
Nov. 17 at Arkansas
Nov. 23 OLE MISS

SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 1 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Sept. 8 at Georgia
Sept. 15 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 22 at LSU
Sept. 29 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 4 KENTUCKY
Oct. 13 at North Carolina
Oct. 20 VANDERBILT
Oct. 27 at Tennessee
Nov. 3 at Arkansas
Nov. 10 FLORIDA
Nov. 24 CLEMSON

TENNESSEE
Sept. 1 at California
Sept. 8 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 15 at Florida
Sept. 22 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 6 GEORGIA
Oct. 13 at Mississippi State
Oct. 20 at Alabama
Oct. 27 SOUTH CAROLINA
Nov. 3 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 10 ARKANSAS
Nov. 17 VANDERBILT
Nov. 24 at Kentucky

VANDERBILT
Sept. 1 RICHMOND
Sept. 8 ALABAMA
Sept. 15 OLE MISS
Sept. 29 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 6 at Auburn
Oct. 13 GEORGIA
Oct. 20 at South Carolina
Oct. 27 MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 3 at Florida
Nov. 10 KENTUCKY
Nov. 17 at Tennessee
Nov. 24 WAKE FOREST

SUN BELT

ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 1 at Texas
Sept. 8 MEMPHIS
Sept. 15 SMU
Sept. 22 at Tennessee
Oct. 6 at Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 13 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Oct. 20 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 27 TROY
Nov. 3 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Nov. 10 at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 15 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 24 at Southern Miss

FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 1 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 8 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 15 vs. Minnesota (Miami)
Sept. 22 at North Texas
Sept. 29 at Kentucky
Oct. 6 USF
Oct. 20 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 27 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Nov. 10 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 17 at Florida
Nov. 24 at Florida International
Dec. 1 at Troy

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Sept. 1 at Penn State
Sept. 8 MARYLAND
Sept. 15 at Miami (FL)
Sept. 22 at Kansas
Sept. 29 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 6 TROY
Oct. 20 at Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 27 at Arkansas
Nov. 3 at Arkansas State
Nov. 17 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 24 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Dec. 1 NORTH TEXAS

LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Sept. 1 at South Carolina
Sept. 8 OHIO
Sept. 15 McNEESE STATE
Sept. 22 TROY
Sept. 29 at UCF
Oct. 6 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13 at Arkansas State
Oct. 20 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 3 at Tennessee
Nov. 10 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 17 at Florida International
Nov. 24 LOUISIANA-MONROE

LOUISIANA-MONROE
Aug. 30 TULSA
Sept. 8 at Clemson
Sept. 15 at Texas A&M
Sept. 29 at Troy
Oct. 6 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 13 at North Texas
Oct. 20 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 27 at Florida Atlantic
Nov. 3 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 GRAMBLING STATE
Nov. 17 at Alabama
Nov. 24 at Louisiana-Lafayette

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 1 at Florida Atlantic
Sept. 6 at Louisville
Sept. 15 at LSU
Sept. 20 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 29 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 6 VIRGINIA
Oct. 13 at Memphis
Oct. 20 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 27 at North Texas
Nov. 3 at Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 10 LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
Nov. 20 at Troy

NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 1 at Oklahoma
Sept. 8 at SMU
Sept. 22 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 29 at Arkansas
Oct. 6 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Oct. 13 LOUISIANA-MONROE
Oct. 20 at Troy
Oct. 27 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 NAVY
Nov. 15 at Arkansas State
Nov. 24 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Dec. 1 at Florida International

TROY
Sept. 1 at Arkansas
Sept. 8 at Florida
Sept. 14 OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 22 at Louisiana-Lafayette
Sept. 29 Louisiana-Monroe
Oct. 6 at Florida International
Oct. 20 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 27 at Arkansas State
Nov. 3 at Georgia
Nov. 10 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 20 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Dec. 1 FLORIDA ATLANTIC

WAC

BOISE STATE
Aug. 30 WEBER STATE
Sept. 8 at Washington
Sept. 15 WYOMING
Sept. 27 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 7 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 14 NEVADA
Oct. 20 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 26 at Fresno State
Nov. 3 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 10 at Utah State
Nov. 17 IDAHO
Nov. 23 at Hawaii

FRESNO STATE
Sept. 1 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 8 at Texas A&M
Sept. 15 at Oregon
Sept. 29 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 6 at Nevada
Oct. 13 at Idaho
Oct. 20 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 26 BOISE STATE
Nov. 3 UTAH STATE
Nov. 10 at Hawaii
Nov. 24 KANSAS STATE
Dec. 1 at New Mexico State

HAWAII
Sept. 1 TBA
Sept. 8 at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 15 at UNLV
Sept. 22 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 29 at Idaho
Oct. 6 UTAH STATE
Oct. 12 at San Jose State
Oct. 27 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 3 TBA
Nov. 10 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 16 at Nevada
Nov. 23 BOISE STATE
Dec. 1 WASHINGTON

IDAHO
Sept. 1 at USC
Sept. 8 CAL POLY
Sept. 15 at Washington State
Sept. 22 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 29 HAWAII
Oct. 6 at San Jose State
Oct. 13 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 20 at New Mexico State
Oct. 27 at Nevada
Nov. 3 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 17 at Boise State
Nov. 24 UTAH STATE

LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 1 CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 8 HAWAII
Sept. 15 at California
Sept. 29 at Fresno State
Oct. 6 at Ole Miss
Oct. 13 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 20 BOISE STATE
Oct. 27 at Utah State
Nov. 3 at Idaho
Nov. 10 at LSU
Nov. 17 SAN JOSE STATE
Dec. 1 at Nevada

NEVADA
Sept. 1 at Nebraska
Sept. 8 at Northwestern
Sept. 15 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 29 UNLV
Oct. 6 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 14 at Boise State
Oct. 20 at Utah State
Oct. 27 IDAHO
Nov. 2 at New Mexico State
Nov. 16 HAWAII
Nov. 24 at San Jose State
Dec. 1 LOUISIANA TECH

NEW MEXICO STATE
Aug. 30 SE LOUISIANA
Sept. 8 at New Mexico
Sept. 15 UTEP
Sept. 22 at Auburn
Sept. 29 ARKANSAS-PINE BLUFF
Oct. 7 at Boise State
Oct. 13 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 20 IDAHO
Oct. 27 at Hawaii
Nov. 2 NEVADA
Nov. 10 at San Jose State
Nov. 17 UTAH STATE
Dec. 1 FRESNO STATE

SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 1 at Arizona State
Sept. 8 at Kansas State
Sept. 15 at Stanford
Sept. 22 at Utah State
Sept. 29 UC DAVIS
Oct. 6 IDAHO
Oct. 12 HAWAII
Oct. 20 at Fresno State
Nov. 3 at Boise State
Nov. 10 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 17 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 24 NEVADA

UTAH STATE
Aug. 30 UNLV
Sept. 8 at Wyoming
Sept. 15 at Oklahoma
Sept. 22 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 29 at UTAH
Oct. 6 at Hawaii
Oct. 20 NEVADA
Oct. 27 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 3 at Fresno State
Nov. 10 BOISE STATE
Nov. 17 at New Mexico State
Nov. 24 at Idaho

NATIONAL RECRUITING

By Mike Farrell
Rivals.com

1 Florida

QB-3, RB-2, WR-2, TE-1, OL-3, DL-6, LB-3, DB-4, ATH-2, ST-1

Winning the national championship in January propelled the Florida Gators to an additional national title in 2007 — on the recruiting trail. After falling just short a year ago, the Gators landed the top recruiting class in the country. The group includes 27 signees, including 20 four- and five-star prospects as ranked by Rivals.com. Florida picked up the top two players in the Sunshine State, along with five-star prospects from Georgia and South Carolina. Florida reached for top players from other areas of the country as well, landing standouts from Maryland, Indiana, California and New Jersey, showing off Urban Meyer's ability to recruit nationally.

Meyer's class includes the top defensive end in the country (**Carlos Dunlap**), the No. 2 defensive tackle (**Torrey Davis**), the top offensive guard (**James Wilson**) and the No. 2 dual-threat quarterback (**Cameron Newton**). The 6-6, 255-pound Dunlap had a dominating senior year in which he registered 104 tackles, 34 for loss and 16 sacks. Joining him on the future Gator defensive line is the 6-5, 290-pound Davis who had 16 sacks as a senior. Wilson is an intimidating force with good feet. The lineman can play numerous positions at 6-4, 305-pounds. Newton is one of the fastest rising prospects in the country. He's big (6-5, 220) and has impressive 4.51-second speed.

Florida filled needs all over the field, but especially at quarterback, defensive end and defensive back. Aside from Dunlap, Davis and Wilson, a few other players that could see the field early include running backs **Chris Rainey** and **Bo Williams** and athlete **Joe Haden**.

2 Southern California

QB-1, RB-3, WR-2, TE-1, OL-2, DL-5, LB-2, DB-1, ATH-1, ST-0

Although they fell just short of another national championship appearance, Pete Carroll continues to find plenty of success on the recruiting trail. After three years on top in the recruiting world, Pete Carroll and company came up a little short with the nation's No. 2 recruiting class. The Trojans landed 18 players in 2007, including 16 that were ranked as four-star prospects or better by Rivals.com. Of those, USC landed nine of the top 15 players in California, as well as the No. 2 prospect in the country — who is from Louisiana. Southern Cal added more top recruits from across the country, including difference-makers from Arizona, Arkansas and Michigan.

Leading the way for Carroll's class is running back **Joe McKnight**, the No. 2 player in the country. The 6-1, 193-pound McKnight is fast and shifty, and likely will be the next great tailback in Trojan lore. On defense, **Everson Griffen** (nation's No. 6 overall prospect) has ridiculous speed for an end. So much so that he played running back for his high school team last season and ran for 1,200 yards and 22 touchdowns. He posted 77 tackles and 16 sacks on defense. Griffen is an amazing athlete for his size (6-4, 266 pounds).

Other players that likely could contribute early for Southern Cal are the top wide receiver in the country (**Ronald Johnson**), the No. 2 running back in the country (**Marc Tyler**), the No. 1 outside linebacker (**Chris Galippo**) and the No. 3 offensive guard (**Kristofer O'Dowd**). While McKnight brings speed, Tyler has power and will be a perfect complement in the Trojans offense. Johnson should have no problem continuing the receiver success at Southern Cal. Galippo is simply a tackling machine.

3 Tennessee

QB-1, RB-5, WR-4, TE-0, OL-2, DL-7, LB-3, DB-5, ATH-5, ST-0

Phillip Fulmer rebounded from a weak 2006 recruiting class with one of the top classes in the country. The class of 32 players features 16 four- or five-star prospects as ranked by Rivals.com.

Tennessee landed major help on both sides of the ball, starting with the No. 3 prospect and No. 1 cornerback in the country in **Eric Berry**. In addition, the Volunteers landed the top inside linebacker (**Chris Donald**) and the No. 2 strongside defensive end (**Ben Martin**). Georgia's Berry is a lockdown corner who is a force all over the field. He gained 2,500 yards of total offense, and made 40 tackles and three interceptions as a senior. Donald should be a force at linebacker for years in Knoxville, while Martin has the speed and size to be a terror off the edge. He posted a remarkable 112 tackles, 14 for loss and eight sacks as a senior.

The Volunteers shored up some key positions on both sides of the ball. At running back and defensive back, the Vols acquired five prospects for each position. Texas running back **Lennon Creer** leads the way on offense with his good size and speed. On defense, Berry will be joined by four-star prospects **Nevin McKenzie** and **DeAngelo Willingham**. A few other players that could make an impact next season include the No. 2 prep school prospect (athlete **Brent Vinson**) and the No. 3 junior college prospect (wide receiver **Kenny O'Neal**).

4 LSU

QB-1, RB-0, WR-3, TE-3, OL-4, DL-5, LB-0, DB-3, ATH-5, ST-2

LSU put together a solid recruiting class and finished at No. 4 in the rankings after picking up 26 recruits. Of those, 21 were ranked as four-star prospects or better by Rivals.com. Besides landing seven of the top 10 players in Louisiana, LSU pulled some top prospects from Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Michigan.

Les Miles acquired some significant help on offense, starting with the wide receiver position. The Tigers landed the No. 2 wide receiver in the country, **Terrance Toliver**. The 6-4, 185-pounder hauled in 42 receptions for 842 yards and six touchdowns last season. Joining him on offense are wide receivers **DeAngelo Benton** and **Demetrius Byrd**, along with big tight end **Jordon Corbin**. A possible eventual replacement for JaMarcus Russell is Rivals250 quarterback **Jarrett Lee**, who has good speed and size. He has accounted for more than 6,000 yards of offense and 79 touchdowns the past two years.

The defense got a boost up front with the addition of ends **Kentravis Aubrey** and **Sidell Corley**. Tackles **Joseph Barksdale**, **Will Blackwell** and **Drake Nevis** provide depth along the line. Three of the five are in the Rivals100. LSU added plenty of speed. The Tigers landed the top athlete in the country, **Chad Jones** (No. 14 overall). Jones posted 120 tackles and 12 interceptions last season.

5 Texas

QB-1, RB-2, WR-3, TE-3, OL-4, DL-5, LB-1, DB-3, ATH-2, ST-0

As usual, Texas picked up another strong recruiting class with 24 commitments. Nineteen of those prospects committed before the end of summer. It was no surprise that Texas cleaned up in-state by keeping 12 of the top 20 prospects at home, including three of the top five.

The top recruits heading to Austin are massive offensive guard **Tray Allen** and speedy cornerback **Curtis Brown**. The 6-4, 305-pound Allen is the No. 2 offensive guard in the country. Meanwhile, the 6-0, 174-pound Brown is rated as the No. 2 cornerback in the nation. In the past two seasons, he has accumulated more than 2,800 yards of offense and 33 touchdowns.

Allen will go a long way in shoring up any troubles along the offensive line. He'll be helped by three more linemen in **Kyle Hix**, **Michael Huey** and **Aundre McGaskey**, all of whom were ranked in the Rivals250. Other players that could be special for the Longhorns in the near future are athlete **John Chiles**, defensive tackle **Andre Jones**, wide receiver **Malcolm Williams** and running back **Cody Johnson**.

6 South Carolina

QB-1, RB-3, WR-6, TE-2, OL-3, DL-6, LB-2, DB-6, ATH-2, ST-0

Steve Spurrier is starting to make his presence felt at South Carolina. It has taken a little while, but Spurrier has put together an impressive recruiting class that is filled with talent. The huge, 31-recruit class isn't just about quantity. Fifteen of those prospects were rated four-stars or better by Rivals.com.

The Gamecocks hope they found their replacement for Sidney Rice in

6-1, 190-pound **Chris Culliver**. The No. 1 prospect in North Carolina and No. 19 player in the country has blazing speed and plays a physical brand of football. On the opposite side of the ball, Spurrier got some help at defensive end with the No. 2 player in the Palmetto State, **Cliff Matthews**.

South Carolina picked up some additional help on offense at wide receiver and on the defensive line. Aside from Culliver, Spurrier will have plenty of weapons in his spread offense with the likes of **Jason Barnes**, **Michael Bowman**, **Dion Lecorn**, **Matt Clements** and **Larry Freeman**. On defense, Spurrier has added plenty of speed and size. Three linemen could make an immediate impact: **Travian Robertson**, **Weslye Saunders** and **Olufemi Ajiboye**. Not to be overlooked is a new gunslinger in Rivals100 dual-threat quarterback **Stephen Garcia**.

7 Auburn

QB-1, RB-2, WR-2, TE-2, OL-8, DL-4, LB-5, DB-3, ATH-2, ST-1

Another successful season for Tommy Tuberville at Auburn resulted in an impressive recruiting class. The Tigers put together the No. 7 rated class in the country according to Rivals.com, a class that brings in 30 recruits — 13 of which are four-star prospects.

Offensive line was the obvious focus of this class, as eight linemen committed this past year. Leading the way on the line is the No. 1 prospect in Arkansas and No. 4 tackle in the country, **Lee Ziemba**. He is joined by four-star guard **Chaz Ramsey** and four-star center **Ryan Pugh**.

One additional focus was at linebacker, where the Tigers pulled in five prospects. Four-star prospects **Josh Bynes**, **Eltoro Freeman** and **Carlton Johnson** will look to make an impact early. Two other prospects that could make a big impact in the near future are big 6-3, 180-pound wide receiver **Chris Slaughter** and tailback **Enrique Davis**, the No. 30 prospect in the country.

8 Notre Dame

QB-1, RB-2, WR-1, TE-1, OL-4, DL-2, LB-2, DB-1, ATH-3, ST-1

Since Charlie Weis has taken over at Notre Dame, he has raised the program back to heights not seen in years. That success on the field has transferred to recruiting. The Irish landed the No. 8 recruiting class in the country for the second consecutive year. Notre Dame pulled in a solid 18-man group that includes talent from coast to coast. ND lured players from California, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, Virginia and South Carolina. The class includes 13 players ranked as four-star prospects or better by Rivals.com.

The top player in the country, 6-3, 200-pound quarterback **Jimmy Clausen**, is already on campus. In the past three years, Clausen has accumulated more than 9,800 yards of offense and 144 total touchdowns. He has already participated in spring practice and will be looking to take over the starting quarterback job left by Brady Quinn.

Clausen will have plenty of talent to help him at Notre Dame. Rivals100 running backs **Robert Hughes** and **Armando Allen** will help form the backfield of the future. In addition, the Irish added a huge wide receiver threat in 6-5, 209-pound **Duval Kamara**. Big tight end **Mike Ragone** should also contribute in the passing game. The offensive line now includes talented tackles **Andrew Nuss** and **Matt Romine**. Other players that could make an impact include athletes **Steve Paskorz**, **Harrison Smith** and **Golden Tate** as well as defensive end **Kerry Neal** and cornerback **Gary Gray**.

9 Georgia

QB-1, RB-1, WR-2, TE-2, OL-8, DL-4, LB-2, DB-2, ATH-0, ST-1

Despite struggling through a difficult start, Mark Richt and Georgia improved as the season progressed. They finished on a high note, with a big win in the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl. Following the victory, the Bulldogs put together a terrific 23-man recruiting class that ranks ninth nationally and includes 12 four-star prospects.

Sophomore quarterback **Matthew Stafford** will have a lot of help along the offensive line in years to come. Georgia signed eight linemen, including four-star prospects **Trinton Sturdivant**, **Chris Little** and **Justin Anderson**. Further help will come on offense with the addition of elusive and speedy tailback **Caleb King**. He missed most of his senior year because of injury, but ran for 2,768 yards as a junior. In addition, further help on offense will be supplied by big tight ends **Bruce Figgins** and **Aron White**, along with quick wideout **Israel Troupe**.

The defensive line got a major upgrade with 6-5, 275-pound junior college tackle **Jarius Wynn**. He'll be joined by four-star ends **Neland Ball**, **Justin Houston** and **Corvey Irvin**. Two other players that could make an impact soon are dual-threat quarterback **Logan Gray** and linebacker **Rennie Curran**.

10 Alabama

QB-1, RB-3, WR-2, TE-1, OL-2, DL-8, LB-2, DB-4, ATH-1, ST-0

Though he only had a month, Nick Saban jumped into the fray at Alabama and put together a remarkable recruiting class. The 24-player group features 10 four-star prospects according to Rivals.com. Saban and the Crimson Tide went across the South for talent. They lured players from Virginia, Georgia, Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Tennessee.

The three top prospects making their way to Tuscaloosa are **Kerry Murphy** (No. 4 defensive tackle), **Rolando McClain** (No. 2 inside linebacker) and junior college safety **Michael Ricks**. The 6-5, 315-pound Murphy accounted for 142 tackles in the past two years at Hoover (Ala.) High.

The Tide also added end **Alex Watkins** and wide bodies **Luther Davis** and **Alfred McCullough** on the defensive line. In addition to Ricks, Saban acquired two potential lockdown corners in **Chris Lett** and **Kareem Jackson**. Both could see playing time early. On offense, athletic wide receiver **Brandon Gibson** and versatile all-purpose back **Demetrius Goode** should take over some of the workload soon.

11 Oregon

QB-0, RB-1, WR-4, TE-2, OL-4, DL-6, LB-4, DB-5, ATH-2, ST-1

Mike Bellotti and Oregon wrapped up a solid season with a very talented recruiting class. The Ducks pulled in a 29-man group that includes 12 four-star prospects. As usual, most of the talent came from the West, particularly California.

Although a lot of talent came from the Golden State, Oregon's top recruit is from Portland. Defensive tackle **Myles Wade** was ranked the No. 8 defensive tackle in the country by Rivals.com. Wade has posted 102 tackles and 13 sacks the past two seasons. Joining Wade along the line is 6-5, 275-pound junior college defensive end **Will Tukufa**.

The Ducks got some major help in the defensive backfield with five commitments. Two four-star prospects, **Todd Doxey** and **Anthony Gildon**, should help defend the passing games in the Pac-10. Other players that could make an impact as early as next season include athlete **Malachi Lewis**, linebacker **Terrance Pritchett**, wide receivers **Drew Davis** and **Terence Scott** and offensive linemen **Darrion Weems** and **Carson York**.

12 Michigan

QB-1, RB-2, WR-4, TE-1, OL-2, DL-2, LB-3, DB-4, ATH-1, ST-0

Michigan rarely has trouble on the recruiting trail, and 2007 was no different. Lloyd Carr and the Wolverines landed the No. 12 class in the country. Michigan signed 20 players, seven of whom were rated four-stars or better by Rivals.com. The Wolverines pulled in top prospects from Texas, Virginia, Pennsylvania, California, Illinois, Kansas and Quebec, Canada.

The stars of the class are quarterback **Ryan Mallett** and cornerback **Donovan Warren**. The 6-6, 235-pound Mallett has a huge arm and was rated the No. 4 prospect in the country after throwing for 3,353 yards and 31 touchdowns last season. The 6-0, 175-pound Warren is a speedy lockdown corner that rates as the No. 3 cornerback in the country. He posted 87 tackles and four interceptions the past two seasons.

Michigan added some depth at wide receiver and defensive back, pulling in four prospects for each position. The stars at wideout are big targets **Toney Clemons** and **Martell Webb**. On defense, Warren is joined by Rivals250 safety **Michael Williams**. Others that could make an impact in their first seasons in

Ann Arbor immediately are linebacker **Austin Panter** and defensive end **Ryan Van Bergen**.

13 Nebraska

QB-2, RB-3, WR-2, TE-1, OL-2, DL-7, LB-2, DB-5, ATH-2, ST-1

Bill Callahan has lifted Nebraska back into the national spotlight, and that has resulted in success on and off the field. The Class of 2007 was a good one for the Cornhuskers. They pulled in a 27-man class that featured 10 four-star prospects according to Rivals.com. Without much talent nearby, Nebraska looked to states including Kansas, Arizona, Colorado, Louisiana, California and Florida for prospects.

Callahan and staff acquired some major help along the defensive line with seven recruits. At end, **William Yancy** brings speed and power. He posted 84 tackles and 10 sacks as a senior. The tackle position picked up three space fillers in **Shukree Barfield**, **Kevin Dixon** and **Joseph Townsend**.

In addition, the defensive backfield got an upgrade with five commits. Star junior college players **Larry Asante** (safety) and **Armando Murillo** (cornerback) highlight the group. Each has good speed and size. On offense, the Cornhuskers added some star talent with dual-threat junior college quarterback **Zac Lee**. He threw for 3,471 yards and 31 touchdowns last season. Lee will be helped by power runner **Quentin Castille** and speedy wideout **Niles Paul**.

14 Oklahoma

QB-1, RB-0, WR-3, TE-0, OL-5, DL-4, LB-3, DB-3, ATH-1, ST-1

Even though they were without Adrian Peterson for most of the season, Bob Stoops took the Sooners to the Fiesta Bowl. Following the successful season, Oklahoma pulled in another good recruiting class. Of OU's 21 signees, 10 were rated four-star prospects or better by Rivals.com.

The stars of the Sooners class are junior college inside linebacker **Mike Reed** and local outside linebacker **Austin Box**. The 6-4, 245-pound Reed comes in as the No. 2 junior college prospect in the country. He should see playing time immediately. The 6-3, 215-pound Box is the No. 1 player in Oklahoma and the No. 3 outside linebacker in the country. He posted 87 tackles, 14 for loss and seven sacks as a senior.

Oklahoma got some major help on both sides of the line. Stoops added five offensive linemen, including talented four-star prospects **Phil Loadholt** and **Jason Hannan**. Loadholt is a huge tackle (6-9, 360 pounds). On defense, end **Frank Alexander** is a rangy prospect coming off the edge. Other players that could impress next season for the Sooners are defensive backs **Ryan Broyles**, **Jamell Fleming** and **Desmond Jackson** ... as well as dual-threat quarterback **Keith Nichol**.

15 Ohio State

QB-0, RB-2, WR-2, TE-0, OL-1, DL-2, LB-2, DB-5, ATH-1, ST-0

Although they didn't win the national championship against Florida in January, Ohio State and Jim Tressel put together a solid recruiting class. The Buckeyes group was small with just 15 recruits, but it is a talented bunch. Of the 15 signees, 12 were rated four-star prospects by Rivals.com.

Ohio State's main focus was at defensive back. Safety **Eugene Clifford** leads the group at 6-2, 190-pounds. He is the No. 3 prospect in Ohio and No. 4 safety in the country after posting 131 tackles last season. Joining him in the backfield are four-star prospects **Donnie Evege**, **Nate Oliver** and **James Scott**.

The Buckeyes picked up some help on offense, too, with the addition of speedy running backs **Daniel Herron** and **Brandon Saine**. Finding help to replace the departed Ted Ginn and Anthony Gonzalez will be tough, but **Taurian Washington** should provide some instant relief. Others that could help the Buckeyes next season include defensive end **Soloman Thomas**, defensive tackle **Cameron Heyward** and linebackers **Jermale Hines** and **Brian Rolle**.

16 North Carolina

QB-1, RB-2, WR-4, TE-1, OL-4, DL-3, LB-1, DB-3, ATH-3, ST-1

Butch Davis' return to the college ranks has already been felt on the recruiting trail. In just a few short weeks, the Tar Heels accumulated one of the top recruiting classes in the country with 23 recruits.

The stars of Davis' class are five-star defensive tackle **Marvin Austin** and wide receiver **Dwight Jones**. The 6-2, 291-pound Austin is rated the No. 1 tackle in the country and No. 7 prospect overall after posting 161 tackles and 25 sacks the past two years. He'll likely make a big impact immediately for the Tar Heels defense. Jones is the No. 4 wide receiver in the nation and No. 22 prospect overall. He posted 1,396 yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior, and should continue that success at Chapel Hill.

Wideout **Rashad Mason**, athlete **Greg Little** and massive defensive tackle **Tydreke Powell** could see early playing time. Leading the way on offense for the new Tar Heels is **Mike Paulus**, the top prospect in New York and No. 4 pro-style quarterback in the country. Paulus will compete for time under center next season.

17 Illinois

QB-1, RB-3, WR-1, TE-0, OL-4, DL-5, LB-2, DB-4, ATH-1, ST-0

Despite another down year at Illinois, Ron Zook has had no trouble getting top talent to flock to Champaign. The Illini put together a solid 21-man class that features seven prospects ranked four-stars or higher by Rivals.com. Zook lured players from Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington D.C., Florida, California, Ohio and Maryland.

The impact players in Zook's class are five-star standouts **Arrelious Benn** (WR) and **Martez Wilson** (DE). The 6-1, 210-pound Benn is rated the No. 5 receiver in the country, and is an athletic prospect that should open up the Illinois offense as soon as next season. In the past two years, he has accumulated more than 2,100 yards receiving and 25 touchdowns. The 6-4, 230-pound Wilson comes off the edge with tremendous speed and is the No. 2 weakside defensive end in the nation. He posted a jaw dropping 240 tackles, seven sacks and one interception as a senior

Benn and Wilson aren't the only talents who might make an impact soon for the Illini. Some major holes were filled on both sides of the line. On offense, tackles **Mark Jackson** and **Craig Wilson** bring impressive size and speed. On defense, tackles **Josh Brent** and **D'Angelo McCray** are imposing forces that should bring additional terror to future Big Ten offenses. Rivals250 safety **Anthony Morris** is another player that may make an impact.

18 Miami

QB-1, RB-3, WR-3, TE-0, OL-3, DL-3, LB-0, DB-4, ATH-1, ST-0

A down year, a coaching change and an on-field brawl didn't seem to hurt Miami in the recruiting game. The Hurricanes put together another impressive class that features 18 recruits, eight of which are rated four-stars or better by Rivals.com. Miami mostly stayed in-state this year, but they did acquire talent from Georgia, South Carolina, Colorado, New York, Nebraska and Texas.

The Hurricanes got a major upgrade on offense after finally landing a big-time quarterback in 6-1, 189-pound **Robert Marve**. He is the No. 8 pro-style quarterback prospect in the country. Marve accounted for more than 5,200 yards of offense and 56 touchdowns as a senior. Joining him is the star of Randy Shannon's first class, **Graig Cooper**. The 5-11, 185-pound running back was the nation's top prep school prospect. Cooper brings speed and elusiveness to the position and should fit in immediately.

Shannon is known for defense, and he made major improvements along the line and in the backfield. **Allen Bailey**, the No. 7 strongside defensive end in the country, posted an impressive 112 tackles and six sacks as a senior. The Hurricanes added four DB prospects, including shutdown corner **Doug Wiggins** and athletic safety **Damien Berry**. Others that could make an impact in the near future include wide receiver **Jermaine McKenzie**, offensive tackle **Orlando Franklin** and athlete **Demarcus VanDyke**.

19 Florida State

QB-0, RB-0, WR-1, TE-1, OL-7, DL-2, LB-3, DB-2, ATH-3, ST-1

It wasn't the best of years for Bobby Bowden. His Seminoles ended up making their way to the Emerald Nut Bowl. Despite that, Florida State still found plenty of recruiting success, landing eight four-star prospects among its 20 commitments.

The Seminoles vastly improved their defense with the addition of the No. 2 outside linebacker in the country, **Kendall Smith**. FSU also signed the No. 5 cornerback in the nation, **Dionte Allen**. The 6-1, 207-pound Smith has outstanding speed to blitz or sink into coverage. The 5-11, 175-pound Allen will likely see time next season after posting 60 tackles and two interceptions as a senior. The defense added further help with four-star end **Jamar Jackson**.

Certainly a focus in recruiting was along the offensive line, where Florida State pulled in seven recruits. Leading the way is huge tackle **Antwane Greenlee** and athletic guard **Zach Hillery**. Two athletes that could make an immediate impact next season are Rivals250 prospects **Bradon Paul** and **Bert Reed**.

20 Georgia Tech

QB-2, RB-2, WR-2, TE-0, OL-3, DL-3, LB-3, DB-4, ATH-1, ST-0

After taking the Yellow Jackets to the ACC championship game, Chan Gailey signed a solid recruiting class in Atlanta. Georgia Tech landed an impressive 20-man class that features eight four-star prospects. Most of the recruits came from Georgia, but Gailey and company lured talent from Florida, Pennsylvania, Texas, Alabama and Michigan.

The aggressive defense the Yellow Jackets have become known for got better during the offseason. The addition of end **Derrick Morgan**, the No. 6 strongside defensive end in the country, was an important one. Morgan likely will make an impact next year after already enrolling in class this spring. Opposite him is athletic Rivals250 end **Jason Peters**.

With the departure of Reggie Ball and Calvin Johnson, the offense is in need of a major overhaul. Four-star quarterbacks **Josh Nesbitt** and **Steven Threet** will battle for the position. The 6-6, 225-pound Threet likely will have the advantage because he has already enrolled. Meanwhile, quick running back **Jonathan Dwyer** will be the eventual heir to Tashard Choice. **D.J. Donley**, at 6-foot-4, 200-pounds, is the next big receiver for the Jackets.

21 Clemson

QB-1, RB-0, WR-3, TE-1, OL-4, DL-6, LB-5, DB-3, ATH-0, ST-0

Tommy Bowden is no stranger to the recruiting game, and 2006 was a good year for the Tigers coach. He helped Clemson sign a 23-man class that included seven four-star prospects. As usual, plenty of the talent came from South Carolina, but the Tigers also went to Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama for players.

Bowden and company have to be elated about their secondary. The Tigers signed lockdown cornerback **Marcus Gilchrist** and punishing safety **DeAndre McDaniel**. The 5-11, 175-pound Gilchrist was rated the No. 6 cornerback in the country after recording 73 tackles and four interceptions as a senior. The 6-0, 185-pound McDaniel is the No. 4 prep school player in the country and boasts excellent speed.

The defense added depth and talent at linebacker and defensive end. Clemson received five linebacker commitments, including **Scotty Cooper**. The line got a major upgrade with speed end **Kourtnei Brown**. On offense, **Willy Korn**, the No. 5 dual-threat quarterback, could take over the position as soon as next year. He'll be helped by speedy receiver **Markish Jones** and huge offensive tackle **Landon Walker**.

22 California

QB-1, RB-2, WR-2, TE-2, OL-4, DL-5, LB-5, DB-2, ATH-1, ST-1

California continues to turn solid success on the field into recruiting success. Under Jeff Tedford, 2007 was no different for the Golden Bears. Cal landed 25 recruits, including five four-star prospects as ranked by Rivals.com.

California made it a focus to improve the defense, picking up five linemen and five linebackers. The star of the group is 6-3, 225-pound outside linebacker **Alex Cook**. The junior college star should make an immediate impact for the Bears this fall. The defensive backfield received help, too. Four-star prospect **Chris Conte** is an athletic safety.

On offense, the focus was again on the line. The star of the four linemen is impressive tackle **Matt Summers-Gavin**. He'll be making a push for two quick and elusive tailbacks in **Jahvid Best** and **Shane Vereen**. The 5-10, 183-pound Best ran for more than 3,000 yards and 40 touchdowns last season. The 5-9, 170-pound Vereen posted 1,600 yards and 24 touchdowns. Each will make a push to play this season.

23 Penn State

QB-0, RB-0, WR-3, TE-1, OL-6, DL-3, LB-3, DB-3, ATH-1, ST-1

Penn State is always a national recruiting threat, and in 2007 Joe Paterno and company continued to display their power. The Nittany Lions landed the No. 23 class in the country. Penn State's group features 21 commitments, and eight of them are four-star prospects by Rivals.com. Much of the talent came from the northeast, but Paterno made inroads in Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina and Michigan.

The focus for Penn State this year was on the offensive line. The Nittany Lions nabbed six prospects, including two four-star talents in guards **J.B. Walton** and **Stefen Wisniewski**.

On defense, Penn State bulked up with talented linebackers and defensive backs. Four-star linebackers **Chris Colasanti**, **Nathan Stupar** and **Andrew Dailey** should keep the tradition at "Linebacker University" going strong. Safeties **Nick Sukay** and **Chaz Powell** bring speed and size to the secondary. Not to be overlooked is defensive end **Devon Still**, who posted 74 tackles and 13 sacks as a senior.

24 Virginia

QB-1, RB-1, WR-2, TE-2, OL-3, DL-4, LB-4, DB-3, ATH-3, ST-1

Al Groh and Virginia found some success on the recruiting trail in 2007, filling important needs. The Cavaliers landed a solid 24-man recruiting class that featured seven four-star prospects according to Rivals.com. Virginia pulled out two of the top four prospects in the Commonwealth, but also did damage in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Illinois, North Carolina, Maryland and Kentucky.

No question, the star of Virginia's class is 6-5, 235-pound quarterback **Peter Lalich**. The Rivals250 prospect could likely take the starting job next season for the Cavaliers after accounting for more than 6,000 yards and 53 touchdowns the past two years. Lalich got some help with the addition of talented offensive tackle **Lamar Milstead**, the No. 4 prospect in the District of Columbia.

Groh is known for producing linebackers, and he has four more to work with — including four-star prospects **Terence Fells-Danzer** and **J'Courtney Williams**. The 6-4, 212-pound Williams could make an immediate impact after posting 120 tackles and seven sacks last season. Danzer totaled 82 tackles and seven sacks. Others that could make an impact soon for Virginia are defensive backs **Ras-I Dowling** and **Chase Minnifield**. Big defensive tackle **Nick Jenkins**, who had 95 tackles and 10 sacks as a senior, could also see early playing time.

25 Pittsburgh

QB-1, RB-4, WR-3, TE-2, OL-4, DL-5, LB-3, DB-2, ATH-0, ST-0

Rounding out the top 25 is Dave Wannstedt and Pittsburgh. The Panthers didn't have the best season, but they still put together an impressive recruiting class. Of their 24 signees, six were rated four-star prospects or better according to Rivals.com. Wannstedt's name recognition from his NFL days has helped him land prospects from Florida, North Carolina, Kansas, D.C., Ohio and New Jersey.

With the graduation of Tyler Palko, Pittsburgh has found its next quarterback in 6-3, 220-pound **Pat Bostick**. Rated the No. 6 pro-style quarterback in the country, Bostick will be the man for Wannstedt for years to come. Bostick amassed 7,300 yards passing and 82 touchdowns in the past three years. He'll get help in the backfield from four new running backs, including four-star prep talent **LeSean McCoy**.

Wide receiver and offensive line were positions that have been upgraded. Four-star wideout Aundre Wright should take some pressure off Bostick, and massive guard Chris Jacobson should keep defenders away from the QB. The defensive line picked up two big recruits in athletic end Tony Tucker and talented defensive tackle Tommie Duhart, who posted 58 tackles and four sacks as a senior.

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100 FOR 2007

INCOMING FRESHMEN

TOP 100 PLAYERS BY POSITION

RATING	HT./WT.	HOMETOWN/SCHOOL	COLLEGE

QUARTERBACKS

1. Jimmy Clausen	6-3/200	Westlake Village (Calif.)/Oaks Christian	Notre Dame
4. Ryan Mallett	6-6/235	Texarkana (Texas)/Texas High	Michigan
27. Tyrod Taylor	6-1/200	Hampton (Va.)	Virginia Tech
28. Cameron Newton	6-5/220	Atlanta/Westlake	Florida
44. Aaron Corp	6-4/195	Villa Park (Calif.)/Orange Lutheran	Southern Cal
47. John Brantley	6-3/185	Ocala (Fla.)/Trinity Catholic	Florida
82. Mike Paulus	6-5/220	Syracuse (N.Y.)/Christian Brothers	North Carolina
90. Stephen Garcia	6-3/220	Tampa/Jefferson	South Carolina
98. Willy Korn	6-2/200	Duncan (S.C.)/James F. Byrnes	Clemson

RUNNING BACKS

2. Joe McKnight	6-1/193	River Ridge (La.)/John Curtis	Southern Cal
15. Noel Devine	5-8/175	North Fort Myers (Fla.)/North Fort Meyers	West Virginia
17. Marc Tyler	6-0/215	Westlake Village (Calif.)/Oaks Christian	Southern Cal
30. Enrique Davis	5-11/212	Lynn Haven (Fla.)/Mosley	Auburn
36. John Clay	6-0/222	Racine (Wis.)/Park	Wisconsin
50. Brandon Saine	6-0/200	Piqua (Ohio)/Piqua	Ohio State
52. Armando Allen	5-9/181	Hialeah (Fla.)/Miami Lakes	Notre Dame
57. Lennon Creer	6-1/202	Tatum (Texas)	Tennessee
77. Robert Hughes	5-11/226	Chicago/Hubbard	Notre Dame
81. Caleb King	5-11/186	Norcross (Ga.)/Greater Atlanta Christian	Georgia
85. Raymond Carter	5-11/187	Los Angeles/Crenshaw	UCLA
89. Chris Rainey	5-9/160	Lakeland (Florida)	Florida
94. Jahvid Best	5-10/183	Richmond (Calif.)/Salesian	California

WIDE RECEIVERS

8. Ronald Johnson	6-0/177	Muskegon (Mich.)	Southern Cal
13. Terrance Toliver	6-4/185	Hempstead (Texas)	LSU
19. Chris Culliver	6-1/190	Garner (N.C.)	South Carolina
22. Dwight Jones	6-5/210	Burlington (N.C.)/Cummings	North Carolina
24. Arrelious Benn	6-1/210	Washington (D.C.)/Dunbar	Illinois
34. Duval Kamara	6-5/209	Hoboken (N.J.)/Hoboken	Notre Dame
41. DeAngelo Benton	6-3/195	Bastrop (La.)/Bastrop	LSU
49. Deonte Thompson	6-0/180	Belle Glade (Fla.)/Glades Central	Florida
54. Dez Bryant	6-1/195	Lufkin (Texas)	Oklahoma State
73. Niles Paul	6-2/210	Omaha (Neb.)/North	Nebraska
80. Malcolm Williams	6-3/205	Garland (Texas)	Texas
91. Toney Clemons	6-2/205	New Kensington (Pa.)/Valley	Michigan
100. Brandon Gibson	6-2/190	Mobile (Ala.)/UMS-Wright	Alabama

TIGHT ENDS

38. Aron White	6-4/213	Columbia (Mo.) Rock Bridge	Georgia
66. Aaron Hernandez	6-4/220	Bristol (Conn.) Bristol Central	Florida
83. Mike Ragone	6-4/221	Cherry Hill (N.J.) Camden Catholic	Notre Dame

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

10. Josh Oglesby	6-7/315	Milwaukee (Wis.)/Saint Francis	Wisconsin
12. James Wilson	6-4/305	Ponte Vedra (Fla.)/Nease	Florida
16. Tray Allen	6-4/305	Grand Prairie (Texas)/South Grand Prairie	Texas
23. Ryan Miller	6-6/278	Littleton (Colo.)/Columbine	Colorado
29. Kristofer O'Dowd	6-5/315	Tucson (Ariz.)/Salpointe Catholic	Southern Cal
39. Michael Huey	6-5/290	Kilgore (Texas)	Texas
55. Matt Romine	6-6/285	Tulsa (Okla.)/Union	Notre Dame
61. Lee Ziemba	6-7/295	Rogers (Ark.)	Auburn
65. Antwane Greenlee	6-6/302	Columbus (Ga.)/Hardaway	Florida State
68. Anthony Davis	6-5/341	Piscataway (N.J.)	Rutgers
70. Bryan Bulaga	6-5/270	Woodstock (Ill.)/Marian Central Catholic	Iowa
75. Martin Coleman	6-5/290	Huntington Beach (Calif.)/Edison	Southern Cal
99. Quintin Richardson	6-5/290	Columbia (S.C.)/Spring Valley	South Carolina

DEFENSIVE ENDS

5. Carlos Dunlap	6-6/255	North Charleston (S.C.)//Fort Dorchester	Florida
6. Everson Griffen	6-4/266	Avondale (Ariz.)/Agua Fria	Southern Cal
20. Ben Martin	6-5/230	Cincinnati LaSalle	Tennessee
26. Martez Wilson	6-4/230	Chicago/Simeon	Illinois
32. Cliff Matthews	6-5/245	Cheraw (S.C.)	South Carolina
53. Chris Strong	6-3/251	Batesville (Miss.)/South Panola	Ole Miss
58. Sidell Corley	6-4/250	Mobile (Ala.)/McGill-Toolen	LSU
62. Michael Keck	6-5/215	Harrisonville (Mo.)	Missouri
69. Richetti Jones	6-3/234	Dallas/Lincoln	Oklahoma State
76. Derrick Morgan	6-4/260	Coatesville (Pa.)	Georgia Tech
95. Allen Bailey	6-4/255	Darien (Ga.)/McIntosh County Academy	Miami
96. Travian Robertson	6-4/255	Laurinburg (N.C.)/Scotland County	South Carolina

DEFENSIVE TACKLES

7. Marvin Austin	6-2/291	Washington (D.C.)/Ballou	North Carolina
9. Torrey Davis	6-5/290	Seffner (Fla.)/Armwood	Florida
48. Da'John Harris	6-4/266	Gardena (Calif.)/Serra	Southern Cal
56. Kerry Murphy	6-5/315	Hoover (Ala.)	Alabama
64. Brian Price	6-2/285	Los Angeles (Calif.)/Crenshaw	UCLA
67. Joseph Barksdale	6-6/323	Detroit/Cass Tech	LSU
72. Andre Jones	6-4/305	El Paso/Andress	Texas
74. Myles Wade	6-2/322	Portland (Ore.)/Central Catholic	Oregon
93. Drake Nevis	6-1/281	Marrero (La.)/John Ehret	LSU

LINEBACKERS

11. Chris Galippo	6-3/235	Anaheim/Servite	Southern Cal
18. Chris Donald	6-2/220	Huntingdon (Tenn.)	Tennessee
35. Rolando McClain	6-4/240	Decatur (Ala.)	Alabama
45. Kendall Smith	6-1/207	Bushnell (Fla.)/South Sumter	Florida State
46. Austin Box	6-3/215	Enid (Okla.)	Oklahoma
97. Keenan Robinson	6-3/211	Plano (Texas)/East	Texas

DEFENSIVE BACKS

3. Eric Berry	5-11/194	Fairburn (Ga.)/Creekside	Tennessee
21. Curtis Brown	6-0/174	Gilmer (Texas)	Texas
25. Warren	6-0/175	Long Beach (Calif.)/Poly	Michigan
33. Doug Wiggins	5-11/180	Miami North/Miami Beach	Miami
37. Jerimy Finch	6-1/203	Indianapolis/Warren Central	Florida
40. Dionte Allen	5-11/175	Orchard Lake (Mich.)/St. Mary's	Florida State
42. Marcus Gilchrist	5-11/175	High Point (N.C.)/T.W. Andrews	Clemson
43. Major Wright	6-1/205	Fort Lauderdale Saint/Thomas Aquinas	Florida
51. Jordan Bernstine	5-10/200	Des Moines (Iowa)/Lincoln	Iowa
60. Eugene Clifford	6-2/190	Cincinnati/Colerain	Ohio State
63. Stefoin Francois	6-0/188	Reserve (La.)/East St. John	LSU
78. Gary Gray	5-10/163	Columbia (S.C.)/Richland Northeast	Notre Dame
79. Chaz Powell	6-1/184	New Freedom (Pa.)/Susquehannock	Penn State
84. Morgan Burnett	6-1/182	College Park (Ga.)/North Clayton	Georgia Tech
86. Michael McNeil	6-2/200	Mobile (Ala.)/Davidson	Auburn
88. Ben Wells	6-1/185	Beaumont (Texas)/Ozen	Texas
92. Marshall Jones	6-0/185	Westlake Village (Calif.)/Oaks Christian	Southern Cal

ATHLETES

14. Chad Jones	6-2/220	Baton Rouge (Texas)/Southern Lab	LSU
31. John Chiles	6-1/195	Mansfield (Texas)/Summit	Texas
59. Joe Haden	5-10/189	Fort Washington (Md.)/Friendly	Florida
71. Lamark Brown	6-3/215	St. Louis/Hazelwood West	Kansas State
87. Gerald Jones	6-0/185	Oklahoma City (Okla.)/Millwood	Tennessee

100 FOR 2008

TOP HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

TOP 100 PLAYERS LISTED BY STATE

NAME	POS.	HOMETOWN	STATE	SCHOOL
Mark Barron	ATH	Mobile	AL	St. Paul's
Julio Jones	WR	Foley	AL	Foley
Tyler Love	OT	Mountain Brook	AL	Mountain Brook
Antoine McClain	OT	Anniston	AL	Anniston
Burton Scott	ATH	Prichard	AL	Vigor
Gerell Robinson	ATH	Chandler	AZ	Hamilton
Blake Ayles	TE	Orange	CA	Orange Lutheran
Robert Golden	CB	Fresno	CA	Edison
Khaled Holmes	OT	Santa Ana	CA	Mater Dei
Wes Horton	DE	Sherman Oaks	CA	Notre Dame
Datone Jones	DT	Compton	CA	Compton
Matt Kalil	OT	Anaheim	CA	Servite
Uona Kavienga	OLB	Los Angeles	CA	Leuzinger
Anthony McDonald	ILB	Sherman Oaks	CA	Notre Dame
Darrell Scott	RB	Ventura	CA	St. Bonaventure
D.J. Shoemate	WR	Anaheim	CA	Servite
Tyron Smith	OT	Moreno Valley	CA	Rancho Verde
E.J. Woods	S	Encino	CA	Crespi
Jon Major	ILB	Parker	CO	Ponderosa
Masengo Kabongo	DT	Fairfield	CT	Fairfield College Prep
Nigel Bradham	ILB	Crawfordville	FL	Wakulla
Xavier Brewer	CB	Jacksonville	FL	Bartram Trail
Michael Brewster	OT	Orlando	FL	Edgewater
T.J. Bryant	CB	Tallahassee	FL	Lincoln
Marcus Forston	DT	Miami	FL	Northwestern
Jordan Futch	OLB	Hollywood	FL	Chaminade Madonna
Janoris Jenkins	CB	Pahokee	FL	Pahokee
Patrick Johnson	CB	Pompano Beach	FL	Ely
Matt Patchan	OT	Seffner	FL	Armwood
Marcus Robinson	OLB	Homestead	FL	Homestead
Etienne Sabino	OLB	Miami	FL	Krop
Greg Shaw	OT	Miami	FL	Pace
Eric Smith	RB	Seffner	FL	Armwood
Brice Butler	WR	Norcross	GA	Norcross
A.J. Harmon	OT	Louisville	GA	Jefferson County
Tavarres King	WR	Mt. Airy	GA	Habersham Central
Richard Samuel	RB	Cartersville	GA	Cass
DeAngelo Tyson	DT	Statesboro	GA	Statesboro
Cornelius Washington	DE	Waynesboro	GA	Burke County
Solomon Koehler	DT	Kaneohe	HI	Castle
Dan Hoch	OT	Harlan	IA	Harlan
Steven Filer	OLB	Chicago	IL	Mount Carmel
Brandon Green	WR	Chicago	IL	Robeson
Arthur Brown	OLB	Wichita	KS	East
Chase Clement	TE	Thibodaux	LA	E.D. White
Jhyryn Taylor	WR	Franklinton	LA	Franklinton
Chris Tolliver	WR	Rayville	LA	Rayville
Kenny Tate	WR	Hyattsville	MD	DeMatha
Lamaar Thomas	RB	Fort Washington	MD	Friendly
Boubacar Cissko	CB	Detroit	MI	Cass Tech
Dan O'Neill	OT	Grand Haven	MI	Grand Haven
Michael Floyd	WR	St. Paul	MN	Cretin-Derham Hall
Blaine Gabbert	QB	Ballwin	MO	Parkway West
DeAndre Brown	WR	Ocean Springs	MS	Ocean Springs
Templeton Hardy	DT	Sardis	MS	North Panola
Charles Mitchell	CB	Clarksdale	MS	Clarksdale
Brandon Barnes	ATH	Bunn	NC	Bunn
Robert Blanton	S	Matthews	NC	Butler
Terrell Manning	OLB	Laurinburg	NC	Scotland County
Trevor Robinson	OG	Omaha	NE	Elkhorn
Baker Steinkuhler	OT	Lincoln	NE	Southwest
Art Forst	OT	Manasquan	NJ	Manasquan
Will Hill	ATH	Jersey City	NJ	St. Peter's Prep
Dejuan Miller	WR	Metuchen	NJ	Metuchen
Landry Jones	QB	Artesia	NM	Artesia
Brandon Beachum	ILB	Youngstown	OH	Cardinal Mooney
Brandon Moore	TE	Trotwood	OH	Madison
Kyle Rudolph	TE	Cincinnati	OH	Elder
Cordale Scott	WR	Cleveland	OH	Glenville
Devoe Torrence	ILB	Massillon	OH	Washington
Stacey McGee	DT	Muskogee	OK	Muskogee
Jameel Owens	WR	Muskogee	OK	Muskogee
Ethan Johnson	DE	Portland	OR	Lincoln
Jonathan Baldwin	TE	Aliquippa	PA	Aliquippa
Shayne Hale	OLB	Monroeville	PA	Gateway
Jarred Holley	CB	Easton	PA	Easton
Lucas Nix	OT	Jefferson Hills	PA	Thomas Jefferson
Terrelle Pryor	QB	Jeannette	PA	Jeannette
DaQuan Bowers	DT	Bamberg	SC	Bamberg-Ehrhardt
A.J. Green	WR	Summerville	SC	Summerville
Robert Quinn	DE	North Charleston	SC	Fort Dorchester
C.C. Whitlock	CB	Chester	SC	Chester
Chancey Aghayere	DE	Garland	TX	Garland
Dan Buckner	WR	Allen	TX	Allen
Jermie Calhoun	RB	Van	TX	Van
Stephen Good	OT	Paris	TX	Paris
DeSean Hales	WR	Klein	TX	Oak
Justin Johnson	RB	Gilmer	TX	Gilmer
Andrew Luck	QB	Houston	TX	Stratford
Sam McGuffie	RB	Cypress	TX	Cy-Fair
D.J. Monroe	CB	Angleton	TX	Angleton
J.B. Shugarts	OT	Klein	TX	Klein
R.J. Washington	DE	Keller	TX	Fossil Ridge
Aaron Williams	CB	Round Rock	TX	McNeil
Kyle Long	OT	Charlottesville	VA	St. Anne's-Bellfield
E.J. Manuel	QB	Virginia Beach	VA	Bayside
Vinston Painter	OT	Maury	VA	Maury
Ryan Williams	ATH	Manassas	VA	Stonewall Jackson
Kavario Middleton	TE	Lakewood	WA	Lakes
Everette Thompson	DE	Burien	WA	Kennedy

TOP SCHOOLS BY POSITION

QUARTERBACK

1. Florida
2. Notre Dame
3. Virginia Tech
4. Michigan
5. Georgia Tech
6. Nebraska
7. West Virginia
8. Southern Cal
9. North Carolina
10. South Carolina

RUNNING BACK

1. Southern California
2. Tennessee
3. Miami
4. Alabama
5. Notre Dame
6. Ohio State
7. Texas
8. Pittsburgh
9. Nebraska
10. Florida

WIDE RECEIVER

1. South Carolina
2. LSU
3. North Carolina
4. Michigan
5. Southern California
6. Tennessee
7. Texas
8. Ole Miss
9. Oregon
10. Oklahoma State

TIGHT END

1. Arkansas
2. Georgia
3. Texas
4. LSU
5. Maryland
6. Auburn
7. Florida
8. Notre Dame
9. BYU
10. Arizona

OFFENSIVE LINE

1. Auburn
2. Georgia
3. Texas
4. Colorado
5. Florida State
6. Florida
7. LSU
8. Oklahoma
9. Penn State
10. Notre Dame

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

1. Alabama
2. Nebraska
3. North Carolina
4. Florida
5. LSU
6. Oregon
7. Tennessee
8. Oklahoma State
9. Illinois
10. South Carolina

DEFENSIVE END

1. Florida
2. Southern California
3. Tennessee
4. South Carolina
5. Georgia
6. Missouri
7. Illinois
8. Clemson
9. LSU
10. Oregon

LINEBACKER

1. Oklahoma
2. Tennessee
3. Southern California
4. California
5. Auburn
6. Penn State
7. Iowa
8. Virginia
9. Clemson
10. Rutgers

DEFENSIVE BACK

1. Tennessee
2. Ohio State
3. Florida
4. Texas
5. Michigan
6. Miami
7. Alabama
8. South Carolina
9. West Virginia
10. Nebraska

KICKER

1. LSU
2. Boston College
3. California
4. Auburn
5. Florida
6. Baylor
7. Washington
8. Fresno State
9. Stanford
10. Kansas State

ATHLETE

1. LSU
2. Tennessee
3. Notre Dame
4. Texas
5. Kansas State
6. Auburn
7. Florida State
8. Florida
9. Oklahoma State
10. South Carolina

BIG 12 RECRUITING

By John Talman
Rivals.com

Texas

The Longhorns were at the top of the Big 12 again in 2007 after a strong showing in the 2006 class. This group featured a number of game-changing athletes and a strong emphasis on the offensive line. Prospects like offensive guard **Tray Allen** (6-4, 305) and cornerback **Curtis Brown** led the way in the rankings, but several others like athlete/quarterback **John Chiles** (6-1, 195) could provide big early competition for playing time.

Relying on primarily in-state talent, the Longhorns received commitments from four of the top offensive linemen in the Lone Star State. Along with Allen, **Kyle Hix** (6-6, 290), **Michael Huey** (6-5, 290) and **Aundre McGaskey** (6-4, 290) were all big needs filled early on in the process. Also on offense, the receiver was a top position taken with three nationally ranked recruits led by big-bodied pass-catcher **Malcolm Williams** (6-3, 205).

Defensively, the Longhorns also replenished their defensive back group which needed depth. Brown leads the group, but watch out for defensive backs **Ben Wells** (6-1, 185), **Christian Scott** (6-0, 185), and **Earl Thomas** (5-10, 174) who could all find their way into an early role.

Headliner: Tray Allen has the most natural ability of any offensive lineman recruited in the class of 2007. Allen's ability to play up and down the line at a number of different positions made him a national recruit.

Sleeper: Defensive lineman **Sam Acho** could fit in at a number of different ways along the defensive line at defensive tackle or defensive end. He will certainly be one to watch.

Bottom line: For the second year in a row, the Texas class led the Big 12 and came in with the No. 5 group in the country. Again, it was a star-studded group that was put together relatively fast several months before Signing Day.

Nebraska

Needing to add several offensive players to the mix and add depth to the defensive line and secondary, the Huskers again signed a full class. The class was again focused on a healthy mix of junior college and high school prospects. Leading the way was in-state wide receiver **Niles Paul** (6-2, 210) along with highly recruited junior college prospects in quarterback **Zac Lee** (6-2, 200) and safety **Larry Asante** (6-1, 205).

There are several recruits that could make an early impact including big back **Quentin Castille** (6-1, 234) from the Lone Star State who became one of the most sought-after runners in the region during his senior season. All-purpose back **Marcus Mendoza** (5-10, 175) arrived early for spring football and could figure into the mix in certain packages as a freshman.

Adding defensive linemen to a group that lost several starters after the 2006 season was a priority. The Huskers did that and more with three junior college prospects and four high school prospects. Watch out for all three jucos **Shukree Barfield** (6-4, 310), **Kevin Dixon** (6-3, 292) and **Joseph Townsend** (6-4, 295) as they could make for an interesting fall.

Headliner: While several junior college recruits could see the field earlier, receiver Paul, the nephew of Ahman Green, could be the biggest recruit in the long-term. His speed and size make him a valuable asset in a pro-style offense.

Sleeper: Wide receiver **Curenski Gilleylen** (6-0, 210) has the speed to stretch the field. He is a player that will add a new dimension to the offense in Lincoln.

Bottom line: Needing to add instant help in some areas and depth at others, the Huskers again put together a nationally recognized class for the third year in a row and should again find some playmakers early from the 2007 group.

Oklahoma

With a hole at quarterback after the departure of Paul Thompson, the Sooners did that and more with help on the offensive line, speed at the linebacker position, and a quality group of defensive backs. Oklahoma added former Michigan State QB recruit **Keith Nichol** (6-2, 195) to the commitment list, which adds more intrigue to the quarterback race this spring and fall for the Sooners.

Adding one of the nation's top overall junior college players in linebacker **Mike Reed** should inject more speed and talent into a usually very good corps. High school linebackers **Travis Lewis** (6-1, 213) and **Austin Box** (6-3, 215) have the athleticism of safeties with the size to move down. Defensively the Sooners also added some high quality pieces at defensive back with prospects such as Texas players **Desmond Jackson** (5-11, 187) and **Jamell Fleming** (5-10, 187).

Offensively, big needs were filled along the offensive line with top recruits **Jason Hannan** (6-4, 277) slated to play center and junior college tackle **Phil Loadholt** (6-9, 360) bringing size to the table.

Headliner: Linebacker Reed has the big hitting style combined with speed that makes him intriguing to any school. Reed could figure to be an early starter in his career at Oklahoma.

Sleeper: Keep an eye on athlete **Sam Proctor** (6-0, 202) who fits nicely at the safety position. He should bring size, speed and versatility after playing several positions in high school.

Bottom line: Coach Bob Stoops continues to attack the state of Texas and dominate in-state. The 2007 group was no different except that Oklahoma was limited in open spots and was up against stiff competition after Texas winning the National Championship the year before. Regardless, this is still a group that should produce results.

Oklahoma State

Another solid effort in the talent-rich state of Texas helped the Cowboys cap off another top class ranking in the upper half of the Big 12. Landing two Top 10 players in-state with defensive end **Richetti Jones** (6-3, 234) and **Dez Bryant** (6-1, 195) helped vault the OSU class to another level.

TOP 20 INCOMING BIG 12 RECRUITS

	Player	Ht./Wt.	Pos.	Hometown/School	College
1.	Tray Allen	6-4/305	OG	Grand Prairie (TX) South	Texas
2.	Curtis Brown	6-0/174	CB	Gilmer (Texas)	Texas
3.	Mike Reed	6-4/245	LB	Marysville (Calif.) Yuba CC	Oklahoma
4.	Ryan Miller	6-6/278	OT	Littleton (Colo.) Columbine	Colorado
5.	John Chiles	6-1/195	ATH	Mansfield (Texas) Summit	Texas
6.	Michael Huey	6-5/290	OG	Kilgore (Texas)	Texas
7.	Austin Box	6-3/215	LB	Enid (Okla.)	Oklahoma
8.	Dez Bryant	6-1/195	WR	Lufkin (Texas)	Oklahoma State
9.	Michael Keck	6-5/215	DE	Harrisonville (Mo.)	Missouri
10.	Richetti Jones	6-3/234	DE	Dallas Lincoln	Oklahoma State
11.	Lamark Brown	6-3/215	ATH	St. Louis Hazelwood West	Kansas State
12.	Andre Jones	6-4/305	DT	El Paso (Texas) Andress	Texas
13.	Niles Paul	6-2/210	WR	Omaha (Neb.) North	Nebraska
14.	Gary Chandler	5-11,186	S	Coffeyville (Kan.) CC	Kansas State
15.	P.T. Gates	5-11/195	RB	Mission Viejo (Ga.) Saddleback CC	Colorado
16.	Malcolm Williams	6-3/205	WR	Garland (Texas)	Texas
17.	Ben Wells	6-1/185	CB	Beaumont (Texas) Ozen	Texas
18.	Larry Asante	6-1/205	S	Coffeyville (Kan.) CC	Nebraska
19.	Zac Lee	6-2/200	QB	San Francisco City College	Nebraska
20.	Keenan Robinson	6-3/211	LB	Plano (Texas) East	Texas

Landing versatile Lone Star athlete **William Cole** (5-10, 165) certainly didn't hurt either.

Top ranked junior college signee for the 2007 class, defensive tackle **Tonga Tea** (6-0, 315) from Utah, should make for interesting competition in Stillwater. Also watch out for defensive tackle **Ahmad Jones** (6-2, 319) from Silsbee, Texas who is well above his peers physically in stature.

There could be some nice surprises on the OSU commitment list. Running back **Kendall Hunter** (5-9, 185) didn't get as much attention because of his size, but his speed is special. Receiver **Hubert Anyiam** (6-0, 163) from the North Texas area could find his way onto the field early because of his ball skills and elusiveness. What linebacker **Marcus Richardson** (5-10, 199) lacks in size, he makes up in football ability and speed.

Headliner: Bryant was one of the better receiver prospects in the country and OSU definitely pulled off one of the biggest recruiting coups with his signature on Signing Day. Watch for him to get in the mix often at OSU as early as this fall.

Sleeper: Defensive end **Jamie Blatnick** (6-3, 245) may be the toughest to project, but there is potential there. He could stay outside or move inside to tackle and be a force.

Bottom line: Oklahoma State is quickly becoming a force to be reckoned with in the state of Texas (for both in-state and out-of-state schools). Coach Mike Gundy's approach to using the Lone Star State as an "extended backyard" is obviously paying off and should translate into wins.

Colorado

Putting together a mix of junior college and high school players, the Buffaloes put together a solid class. Much of their success was due to picking up the state's top prospect, Littleton (Colo.) Columbine offensive tackle **Ryan Miller** (6-6, 278). The Buffaloes also added top athletes in junior college running back **P.T. Gates** (5-11, 195) and nationally recruited high school receiver **Markques Simas** (6-1, 198). Both should add electricity to the Buffs' offense.

Colorado also added several key pieces to the puzzle by hitting the junior college ranks in order to fill gaps. One of those top prospects was defensive end **Drew Hudgins** (6-5, 240). With a chance to play early, Hudgins will bring his pass-rushing skills to the table and possibly bring instant impact. Versatile athlete **Anthony Wright** (6-0, 180) is slated to play safety at the next level and he's a guy who had experience on both sides of the ball in high school.

Another name that fell under the radar was junior college defensive tackle **Chris Perri** (6-4, 265) who was highly recruited on the Pacific coast. Perri looks to also help add depth to the inside positions as a three-technique.

Headliner: No matter which way you slice it, offensive tackle Miller signing with Colorado was one of the bigger pickups in recent years for the Buffs. His frame, size, and strength is rare at his age.

Sleeper: Perri, the junior college defensive tackle, didn't receive the loftiest ranking on a national level, but his late interest from top programs and great size makes him a steal.

Bottom line: The involvement of head coach Dan Hawkins in the recruiting class for 2007 certainly made a big difference. Hawkins was more involved than almost every other head coach in the conference. He was also key in keeping the top in-state player, Miller, home.

Missouri

Landing four of the Top 10 prospects in-state and going into Texas and California helped the 2007 class for the Tigers leave its mark. The Tigers stayed at home to pick up prospects ranked in the top five for the Show Me State, defensive end **Michael Keck** (6-5, 215) and running back **Derrick Washington** (5-11, 194). Keck, though rated as a defensive end, has the speed and versatility to see time in the role of a linebacker. He also has the potential to grow into a pass-rushing defensive end. Washington was considered the best running back in the state.

Defensive tackle **Andy Maples** (6-3, 300) could come from the junior college ranks and make an impact early for the Tigers. Highly ranked athlete **Gilbert Moye** from Texas will get a starting look at quarterback, but has the athleticism to move to receiver or even a defensive position.

The linebacker and defensive back positions got big boosts. Picking up Flint (Mich.) Carman-Ainsworth linebacker **George White** (6-2, 252) late along with Keck helps bolster the numbers at that position. At defensive back, Pasadena (Calif.) City College safety **Justin Garrett** (6-2, 200) is ready to possibly step in and help immediately.

Headliner: The top in-state signee, defensive end/linebacker Keck, is oozing with potential. He could grow into a defensive end, or be a force at the linebacker position.

Sleeper: Keep close watch on Texas-born receiver **Kendall Irving** (5-10, 175). An ACL injury slowed him as a senior, but he'll be the only new receiver coming in August.

Bottom line: The Tigers did well in-state landing two of the state's top running backs and filling several needs on defense with prospects like Keck. The linebacker and defensive line positions got the most impact power, but prospects like Moye could end up being big-time weapons on offense for the Tigers whether he lines up at quarterback or receiver.

Kansas State

With the exception of Texas, the Wildcats started faster than almost every other Big 12 team in putting together commitments for the class of 2007. Starting in-state and working out, Kansas State found solid prospects in Missouri, Florida and Texas to fill the group. Two prospects expected to find their way on the field early include athlete **Lamark Brown** (6-3, 215) and junior college defensive back **Gary Chandler** (5-11, 186).

Brown's size and physical nature makes him look like a linebacker, but he looks to be on the offensive side of the ball at receiver first. Chandler was on campus for spring practice and looks to make an early move on the strong safety position. Junior college linebacker **Chris Patterson** (6-3, 215) originally signed with Oklahoma out of high school, but could see early time in his career at KSU depending on development.

At the high school level, KSU could see several early starters. Chicago defensive tackle **Xzavier Stewart** (6-1, 275) is an aggressive defender who could make early noise at the nose tackle spot. Also keep an eye on in-state quarterback **Tysyn Hartman** (6-2, 190) who may not see the field right away, but has athleticism to play other positions.

Headliner: Though a few junior college players could fit into the mix earlier, Brown's athleticism combined with his size makes him a prospect to watch. A big thick high school senior, Brown still showed flashes of coverage ability and ball skills.

Sleeper: No one fell farther under the radar in the Dallas Metroplex last year than receiver **Danny Hogan** (6-2, 190). Kansas State found a diamond in the rough with this speedy pass-catcher.

Bottom line: Though the Kansas State class of 2007 didn't rank among the nation's top classes, what it helped with was filling needs. Ron Prince again used talent-rich states like Texas and California, along with the junior college ranks, to fill holes and depth to several positions. Making Kansas and Missouri was a priority as well.

Texas A&M

Though it didn't appear to be as high quality-wise as previous years, the Aggies still signed a class with some talented prospects on both sides of the football. Running back **Bradley Stephens** (5-10, 185) made an early commitment to the Aggies back in February of 2006 and held a national list of scholarship offers. Stephens rushed for more than 5,000 yards in his junior and senior years combined.

Linebacker **Derrick Stephens** (6-3, 220) is also a true inside linebacker with the ability make an early name for himself. A hybrid player, **Von Miller** (6-3, 210) could be an outside linebacker or a defensive end as his college career moves along. Athlete **Brandon Williams** (6-4, 215) is versatile. Playing quarterback in high school, Williams will make a quality safety or linebacker.

The defensive line got big time help from prospects like **Brandon Joiner** (6-3, 220) and **Michael Ebbitt** (6-5, 245). On offense, receiver **Roger Holland** (5-11, 180) is a big time sleeper and quarterback **Ryan Tannehill** (6-4, 195) has the tools to be a great dual-threat signal caller. Tight end **Frank Avery** (6-4, 230) could also be a player who shines late in his career.

Headliner: Running back Stephens is certainly the top prospect brought in for the 2007 class. With a top cast of backs already on campus, Stephens will add to the list.

Sleeper: Offensive lineman **Daniel Baker** (6-6, 285) is just one of several sleepers in the class, but his potential may be the highest. Baker has versatility to line up in several spots up front and has experience at center.

Bottom line: Regardless of national ranking, the Aggies still managed to add some national recruits on defense and a top running back in Stephens. Several names could emerge later in their careers and show the kind of talent that their rankings may not indicate.

Kansas

Signing a well-rounded class, Kansas continues to build their program with heavy focus in-state and also on talented states such as Texas and Oklahoma. As a staff, the Jayhawks continue to impress with their evaluations of the junior college ranks. Defensive back **Ryan Murphy** (5-10, 171) was the No. 3 rated player in Kansas and another huge pickup for the Jayhawks in the secondary. Junior college safety **Patrick Resby** (6-2, 195) could also be in the early mix.

Replacing All-Big 12 performer and running back Jon Cornish wasn't going to be easy, but some solid players were added to the running back position. East Texas runner **Carmen Boyd-Anderson** (6-1, 200) was one of the bigger steals in the Lone Star State. Boyd-Anderson's power running style with deceptive speed makes him a real find. Linebacker **Drew Dudley** arrived at Kansas in the spring and benefitted from learning the system early.

Other prospects who could surprise include receiver **Dezmon Briscoe** (6-2, 180) and junior college offensive guard **Chet Hartley** (6-4, 310). Briscoe is a long-striding receiver who has great hands.

Headliner: Defensive back Murphy quickly moved up the charts as one of the top secondary prospects in the region. He has offensive and defensive experience from high school and should compliment the already talented group well in Lawrence.

Sleeper: Nobody knew much about sleeper linebacker **Justin Springer** (6-4, 220) playing in a lesser known area of Texas. However, his size and highlight film proves that he may be one of the bigger sleepers in the Big 12.

Bottom line: The class didn't rank as high nationally as the 2006 group, but this may be the more productive one when it's all said and done. Top prospects like Murphy combined with diamonds in the rough like Springer will make this group one of the more fun to watch in the coming years.

Texas Tech

The recruiting class for the Red Raiders didn't start incredibly fast in 2007, but was another full year both in quantity and quality much like the 2006 group. With needs on both the offensive and defensive line along with skill position players, Mike Leach and his staff answered the call and put together another fine group.

Top in-state prospects, receiver **Jacob Amie** (6-4, 224) and offensive tackle **Lonnie Edwards** (6-5, 305) lead the group. Amie's size looks like he's built for the tight end spot, but he has the athleticism to make big plays as a receiver in Leach's high-powered offense. Edwards was one of seven offensive linemen taken in the group.

The Red Raiders also locked up a quarterback for the second year in a row. This time Tech went out of state to find Little Rock, Ark., signal-caller **Stefan Loucks** (6-2, 185). Amie was one of five receivers brought in to compliment Loucks. **Detron Lewis** (6-0, 190) may have flown under the radar, but is a solid route runner.

Defensive linemen were also a focus and the Red Raiders certainly added several early impact guys to the position. Seven prospects in all were added at either the tackle or end spots. In-state prospects like **David Neill** (6-5, 244) and **Tyrone Sonier** (6-2, 225) may have the brightest futures further down the road in their careers.

Headliner: Edwards, the highest ranked of the prospects in the 2007 class, has all the tools. Once he learns e offense, he could be an early impact type of prospect at tackle.

Sleeper: No one knew much about **Bobby Agoucha** (6-4, 300) after moving from Houston to the state of Oklahoma. The find in this prospect will add depth early to a shallow defensive tackle corps.

Bottom line: With the focus heavily on the lines, Texas Tech was successful in adding more depth to their defensive and offensive tackle spots. In an offense where there can't be enough quality receivers, the Red Raiders found a big time playmaker in Amie and possibly another star in the making at the quarterback spot.

Iowa State

New coach Gene Chizik took the position at Iowa State and had to come in to finish the majority of the work for the 2007 recruiting class with just seven prospect on board at that time. He hit the ground running and that led to some big pieces to the puzzle. The star of the class is junior college all-purpose back **Jamicah Bass** (6-1, 210) who picked up scholarship offers from all over the country before inking with Iowa State.

At the high school level, the Cyclones went into Nebraska to add dual-threat quarterback **Phillip Bates** (6-2, 189) to the equation. Bates continues to grow as a passer and can change a game with his running ability. In-state, the Cyclones faired well by landing linebacker **Fabian Brown** (6-3, 230). ISU also continued their tradition of recruiting some highly recruited prospects in Texas like offensive tackle **Kelechi Osemele** (6-5, 298).

At the junior college level, the Cyclones added solid prospects like receiver **Wallace Franklin** (6-3, 175), who signed with Nebraska out of high school. Offensive guard **Joe Blaes** (6-2, 290) and defensive end **Chris Lyle** (6-4, 255) also highlight the junior college group.

Headliner: The addition of running back Bass from the junior college ranks was a big one. The Florida native will have three years to play two and looks to make an early impact in the Big 12 North.

Sleeper: There are several sleepers in the group who could surprise, but one important one is defensive tackle **Jerrod Black** (6-2, 280). The sophomore starter in high school is smart and strong at his position.

Bottom line: This class was a combination of work from two coaching staffs with coach Gene Chizik taking the reigns of the football program after Dan McCarney resigned his post. Regardless, there is still a lot to like about the group, including playmakers on offense and some possible sleepers on defense. Considering the circumstances, it was a solid group for ISU.

Baylor

The Bears started off as one of the hotter teams in the country for recruiting early on in the 2007 class. Though there were some losses late, Baylor still managed to assemble a solid group with several big surprises down the stretch. None was bigger than linebacker **Earl Patin** (6-1, 228) hailing from Baton Rouge (La.) Southern Lab. The two-time all-state selection could have a bright career that starts early in Waco as an inside run-stopper with speed.

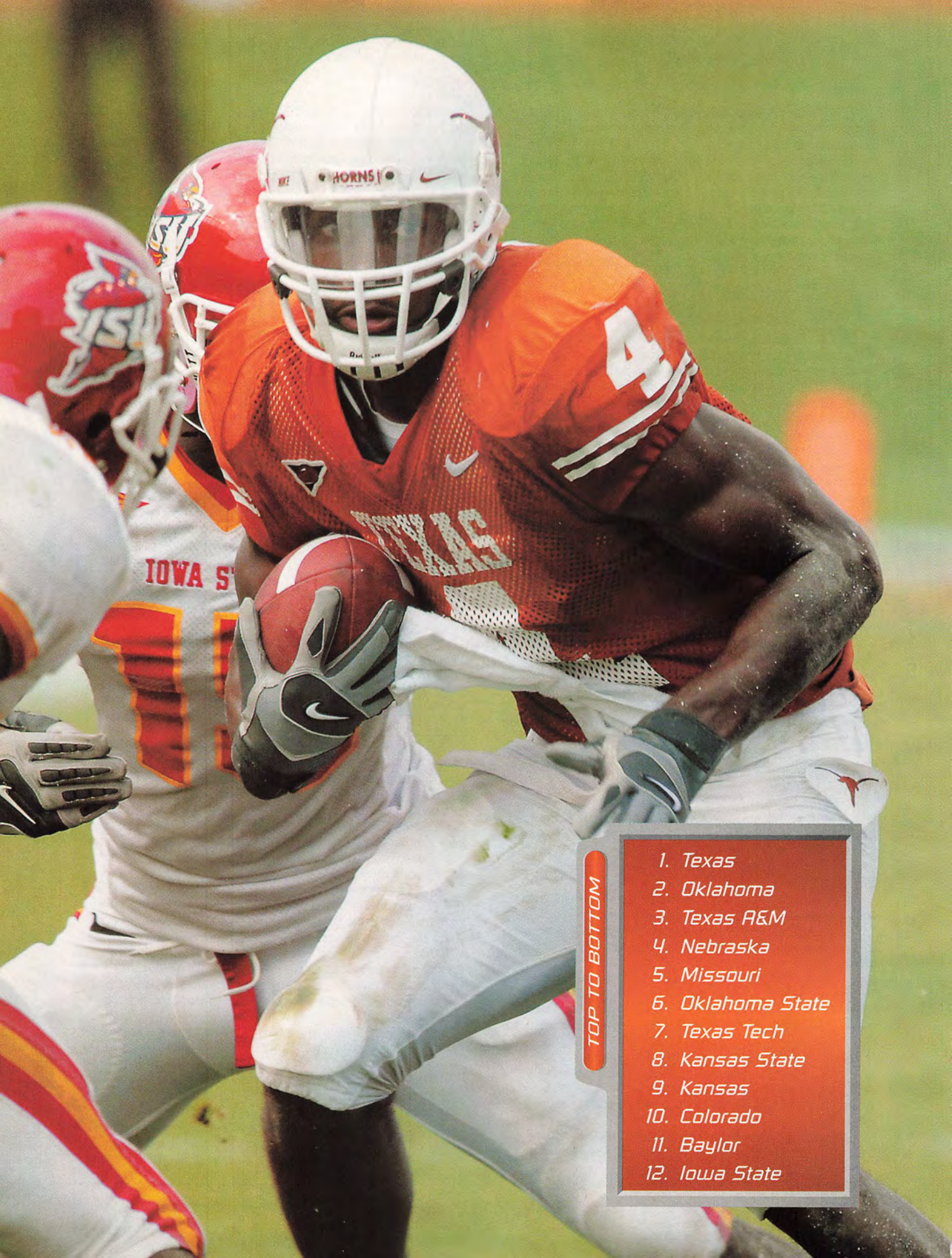
One of the bigger early impact guys will be quarterback **John David Weed** (6-5, 225) who came from the junior college ranks. When Baylor lost a quarterback commitment late to Texas, Weed filled the gab and will fight for a spot this spring. The offensive line was another strong suit in the 2007 class.

The Bears added three of the more highly recruited offensive linemen in the state of Texas with **Courtney Green** (6-4, 285), **Anthony Morgan** (6-3, 335) and **John Jones** (6-4, 310). The linebacker position, along with Patin, should be strong with newcomers **Chris Francis** (5-10, 213) and sleeper **Antonio Johnson** (6-1, 200).

Headliner: There is no question that Patin is the jewel of the class. His instincts and athleticism as just a high school player make him a huge pickup for the group.

Sleeper: Safety **V.J. McElroy** is extremely athletic and spent most of his high school career at quarterback. His father was a standout at Baylor and in the NFL and the younger son has that kind of potential down the line.

Bottom line: Considered the best class in the Guy Morriss era, the Bears were able to fill their needs going into the year including a quarterback, depth along the offensive line, and speed to the defense. The athleticism alone of the team should go up a notch with this effort.



TOP TO BOTTOM

1. Texas
2. Oklahoma
3. Texas A&M
4. Nebraska
5. Missouri
6. Oklahoma State
7. Texas Tech
8. Kansas State
9. Kansas
10. Colorado
11. Baylor
12. Iowa State

And the North Shall Rise Again!?

And the favorite to win the 2007 Big 12 Conference championship is ... Nebraska?

That far-fetched prediction is brought to you by the Committee to Save the Big 12 North.

In some corners of the Big 12, the Huskers are seen as legitimate challengers to the South's domination of the conference in recent seasons. South Division teams have won the past three conference championships and four of the past five.

South teams went 13-5 against northern clubs in 2006, and three of those losses were by South doormat Baylor.

Yet, some observers contend the competitive gap between North and South is narrowing. They point to Kansas State's shocking upset of Texas last November that knocked the Longhorns out of the national championship hunt. Nebraska also saved some Northern face by rallying for a one-point victory at Texas A&M.

The Huskers made it to the conference championship game in their third season under Bill Callahan. Oklahoma scored a 21-7 victory, but the outcome was much more competitive than in the two previous seasons when Oklahoma and Texas won by a combined score of 112-6.

There's no question that Nebraska and Missouri, which figures to challenge the Huskers for the North Division championship, are more capable of competing with the best of the South. The Huskers have closed the talent chasm that existed when Callahan took over the program. Missouri, with its high-powered offense, should be able to hang with almost any team.

But is it realistic to think either of those teams can challenge Texas or Oklahoma? Texas A&M, with 15 starters back, appears better equipped to make a title run than either the Huskers or Missouri.

That's not to say the South's best teams lack issues.

Texas must rebuild the middle of its offensive line, and the Longhorns' pass defense (atrocious as it was at times in 2006) lost three of four starters. On the plus side for the Longhorns is quarterback Colt McCoy, superb as a freshman last season, a solid runner in Jamaal Charles, and the best receiving corps since Mack Brown took over the program.

"We made progress in the spring, but we still have question marks about the secondary and the offensive line," Brown said.

Big 12 Conference Picks

Big 12 South	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. Texas	QB Colt McCoy is healthy and looking to pick up where he left off.	Middle of the offensive line is gone, and secondary needs to upgrade play.	Despite lots of questions to answer, Longhorns remain the class of the league.
2. Oklahoma	Loaded with playmakers at running back, receiver and secondary.	Offense could be led by a freshman QB; defense has holes in front seven.	Uncertainty at quarterback keeps Sooners from being tagged as favorite.
3. Texas A&M	Veteran QB Stephen McGee and talented RBs will work behind experienced line.	Defense made improvements in 2006, but still far from dominant.	Narrowing gap in Big 12 South, but still looks like a long shot for division title.
4. Oklahoma St.	QB Bobby Reid, RB Dantrell Savage and WR Adarius Bowman are difference-makers.	Has not finished higher than 74th nationally in total defense since 2002.	Shootouts, not shutouts, should remain in vogue in Stillwater.
5. Texas Tech	Can expect big production out of QB Graham Harrell, RB Shannon Woods.	Three WR and four OL need to be replaced; defense remains shaky at best.	Coach Mike Leach needs to be at his innovative best again.
6. Baylor	Freshman All-American LB Joe Pawelek leads a potentially solid defensive front.	Needs to find a QB, a running attack and fill three of four holes in secondary.	Still has never reached a bowl as a Big 12 member ... that won't change in '07.
Big 12 North			
1. Nebraska	Transfer Sam Keller should ease loss of All-Big 12 QB Zac Taylor.	Defensive front must be rebuilt, and depth at running back has disappeared.	If Keller is as good as advertised, Huskers should repeat as North champs.
2. Missouri	Tigers will pile up the points with QB Chase Daniel leading the way.	Defensive shortcomings of last season continue to haunt Mizzou.	Has enough offensive firepower to be a factor in North race.
3. Kansas State	Ron Prince's seven wins were most by a Big 12 first-year coach since 1999.	Offensive line remains a puzzle, and defense must adjust to new coordinator.	Should improve in second season under Prince, but still short of contending.
4. Kansas	Defense should be improved; young QBs Kerry Meier and Todd Reesing show potential.	Ranked last nationally in pass defense (but talented junior Aqib Talib offers hope).	Must compete in fourth quarter; late collapses led to five of six losses in '06.
5. Colorado	Nine starters are back from offense that ranked 22nd nationally in rushing.	Needs to get more out of passing game while limiting opponents to less.	Could show progress, but overly ambitious non-conference schedule hurts.
6. Iowa State	QB Bret Meyer, WR Todd Blythe and LB Alvin Bowen among league's elite players.	Loss of four offensive line starters could leave Meyer running for his life.	Gene Chizik era could open even rockier than the end to Dan McCarney's tenure.

Lindy's 2007 ALL-BIG 12 Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Colt McCoy	So.	Texas
RB	Jamaal Charles	Jr.	Texas
RB	Mike Goodson	So.	Texas A&M
WR	Adarius Bowman	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
WR	Limas Sweed	Sr.	Texas
TE	Martin Rucker	Sr.	Missouri
C	Cody Wallace	Sr.	Texas A&M
OL	George Robinson	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Matt Slauson	Jr.	Nebraska
OL	Yemi Babalola	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Anthony Collins	Jr.	Kansas
AP	Perrish Cox	So.	Oklahoma St.
K	Garrett Hartley	Sr.	Oklahoma

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	James McClinton	Sr.	Kansas
DL	Nathan Peterson	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
DL	Frank Okam	Sr.	Texas
LB	Ian Campbell	Jr.	Kansas State
LB	Alvin Bowen	Sr.	Iowa State
LB	Jordon Dizon	Sr.	Colorado
LB	Bo Ruud	Sr.	Nebraska
DB	Aqib Talib	Jr.	Kansas
DB	Reggie Smith	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	Terrence Wheatley	Sr.	Colorado
DB	Marcus Watts	Sr.	Kansas State
P	Matt Fodge	Jr.	Oklahoma St.

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Chase Daniel	Jr.	Missouri
RB	Dantrell Savage	Sr.	Oklahoma St.
RB	Allen Patrick	Sr.	Oklahoma
WR	Maurice Purify	Sr.	Nebraska
WR	Malcolm Kelly	Jr.	Oklahoma
TE	Chase Coffman	Jr.	Missouri
C	Adam Spieker	Sr.	Missouri
OL	Tony Hills	Sr.	Texas
OL	Louis Vasquez	Jr.	Texas Tech
OL	Kirk Elder	Sr.	Texas A&M
OL	Branndon Braxton	Jr.	Oklahoma
AP	Kerry Franks	Sr.	Texas A&M
K	Jeff Wolfert	Jr.	Missouri

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Chris Harrington	Sr.	Texas A&M
DL	George Hypolite	Jr.	Colorado
DL	Jake Ratliff	Jr.	Texas Tech
DL	Ndamukong Suh	So.	Nebraska
LB	Rashad Bobino	Jr.	Texas
LB	Joe Pawelek	So.	Baylor
LB	Mike Rivera	Jr.	Kansas
DB	Marcus Walker	Sr.	Oklahoma
DB	Nic Harris	Jr.	Oklahoma
DB	Marcus Griffin	Sr.	Texas
DB	Joe Garcia	Sr.	Texas Tech
P	Justin Brantly	Jr.	Texas A&M

"We have some experienced guys in the secondary, along with some really talented young guys that can challenge the older guys. We may wind up playing two deep in the secondary during non-conference games, letting the guys back there grow and then figuring out who is the best."

Oklahoma boasts plenty of experience on the offensive front, a stable of talented running backs, and perhaps the best receiving corps in the league. But the Sooners will have a new quarterback — junior Joey Halzle, redshirt freshmen Sam Bradford or true freshman Keith Nichol.

Oklahoma's defense has holes to fill at linebacker and on the edge, but the secondary is overloaded with talent and the special teams are the best in the league.

Texas A&M needs to find playmakers on defense, but suffers no shortage of them on offense. Quarterback Stephen McGee directs an offense that has experience up front and talent at the skill positions.

Nebraska figures to replace All-Big 12 quarterback Zac Taylor with Arizona State transfer Sam Keller. He'll operate behind a much-improved offensive line and will throw to an experienced group of receivers. On the other side, Nebraska must replace its entire defensive line, and its secondary took a massive hit when Zack Bowman suffered his second major knee injury in as many years.

Missouri's defense also is suspect, but its offense is capable of inflicting serious damage. Chase Daniel set school records for a first-year quarterback with 3,527 yards and 28 touchdowns, and figures to have an even better handle on the system as a junior. Tony Temple finished second in the league in rushing, and few college teams have a pair of tight ends the equal of Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman.

Color Oklahoma State as the darkhorse in the conference race. The Cowboys return eight starters from an offense that, along with Boise State, was the only one in college football to average 200 yards passing and rushing last season.

With quarterback Bobby Reid, wide receiver Adarius Bowman and running back Dantrell Savage, OSU is billing itself as "the most powerful offense in the world." No such claims are being made about the defense, for good reason.

— Steve Pivovar

Most Valuable Player

Colt McCoy, QB, Texas

Offensive Player of the Year

Chase Daniel, QB, Missouri

Defensive Player of the Year

Alvin Bowen, LB, Iowa State

Newcomer of the Year

Sam Keller, QB, Nebraska

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Colt McCoy	Texas
Strongest arm	Sam Keller	Nebraska
Best scrambler	Stephen McGee	Texas A&M
Coolest in the clutch	Colt McCoy	Texas
Toughest to bring down	Jorvorskie Lane	Texas A&M
Best hands	Limas Sweed	Texas
Most dangerous deep threat	Adarius Bowman	Oklahoma State
Best run blocker	George Robinson	Oklahoma
Best pass blocker	Cody Wallace	Texas A&M
Best cover corner	Aqib Talib	Kansas
Best pass rusher	Ian Campbell	Kansas State
Special teams demon	Perrish Cox	Oklahoma State

The Big Ones

August 30	
Kent State at Iowa State	Cyclones will take field for the first time in 12 years without Dan McCarney.
September 1	
Kansas State at Auburn	Cream-puff openers are a thing of the past for Ron Prince's Wildcats.
Missouri vs. Illinois	Improved Illini rates as tough opener for Tigers indoors in St. Louis.
Oklahoma State at Georgia	Cowboys will need to be at their best to win between the hedges.
September 8	
Miami at Oklahoma	Still a big-stakes matchup, even with 'Canes having dropped off a bit.
Nebraska at Wake Forest	Huskers could be in big trouble if they're looking ahead to USC.
September 15	
Iowa at Iowa State	Gene Chizik gets first taste of Hawkeye state rivalry.
Florida State at Colorado	Biggest challenge on Buffaloes' demanding non-conference schedule.
Southern California at Nebraska	Callahan must junk play-if-safe game plan of 2006 to gain signature win.
September 22	
Texas Tech at Oklahoma State	Tech has won eight of past 10 meetings, but 0-2 in recent visits to Stillwater.
Texas A&M at Miami	A year ago, Aggies' toughest non-conference game was against Army.
September 29	
Oklahoma at Colorado	Couldn't CU officials have picked an easier homecoming foe?
Kansas State at Texas	Wildcats knocked Longhorns out of national title hunt last season.
October 6	
Oklahoma vs. Texas (Dallas)	Longhorns looking for third straight win in the Red River Shootout.
Nebraska at Missouri	Tigers have beaten Nebraska in past two meetings in Columbia.
Kansas at Kansas State	Conference opener for Jayhawks comes against Sunflower State rival.
October 13	
Texas at Iowa State	Tough stretch for Cyclones: Texas and Oklahoma back-to-back.
Texas A&M at Texas Tech	Aggies haven't won in Lubbock since 1993 (3-9 in last 12 meetings).
October 28	
Texas A&M at Nebraska	Aggies let Huskers steal a win in closing seconds last season.
November 3	
Texas A&M at Oklahoma	Red-zone woes cost Aggies a shot at a big upset win in 2006.
Texas Tech at Baylor	Bears have never beaten Red Raiders in Big 12 play.
November 23	
Nebraska at Colorado	Get your day-after-Thanksgiving shopping done early: 10 a.m. kickoff.
Texas at Texas A&M	Can Aggies make it two in a row over their biggest rival?
November 24	
Oklahoma State at Oklahoma	Sooners hold 78-16-7 edge in nation's most lopsided in-state series.
Kansas vs. Missouri	Bitter rivals square off at Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City.

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

NIC HARRIS

Bowl Connections

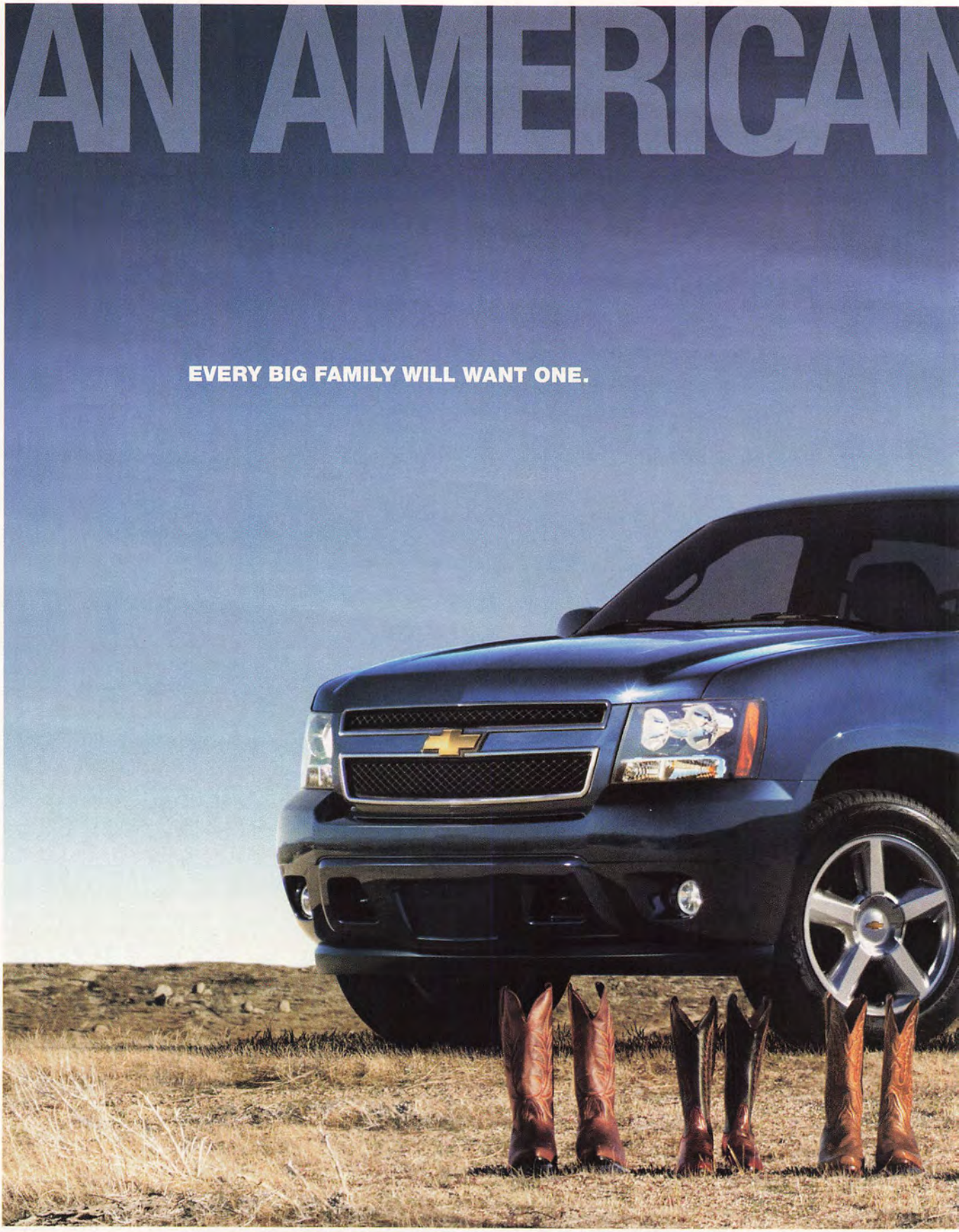
Champion BCS (National Title Game if ranked No. 1 or No. 2, otherwise Fiesta)

Big 12 #2 Cotton vs. SEC #2 or #3
Big 12 #3 Holiday vs. Pac-10 #2
Big 12 #4 Alamo vs. Big 10 #4
Big 12 #5 Gator vs. ACC or Sun vs. Pac-10
Big 12 #6 Insight vs. Big 10
Big 12 #7 Independence vs. SEC
Big 12 #8 Texas vs. Conf USA or Big East

Note: The Gator must choose Big 12 teams twice in a four-year period. When the Gator does not pick a Big 12 school, the Sun Bowl then selects one.

Top 10 NFL Talent

1. Limas Sweed	WR	Sr.	Texas	Big target and speed makes him a big-play threat.
2. Frank Okam	DT	Sr.	Texas	Wait should prove worthwhile for giant defender.
3. Zack Bowman	CB	Sr.	Nebraska	Has NFL talent but bad knees make him a gamble.
4. Allen Patrick	RB	Sr.	Oklahoma	No longer running in Adrian Peterson's shadow.
5. Aqib Talib	CB	Jr.	Kansas	Pros covet cover skills of this talented junior.
6. Red Bryant	DT	Sr.	Texas A&M	Has the size to be a force at the next level.
7. Martin Rucker	TE	Sr.	Missouri	Followed brother's advice to stay in school.
8. Adarius Bowman	WR	Sr.	Oklahoma State	Shedding pounds makes him even more dangerous.
9. Sam Keller	QB	Sr.	Nebraska	Could improve draft stock with solid senior season.
10. Malcolm Kelly	WR	Jr.	Oklahoma	Another junior who could be faced with big decision in '08.



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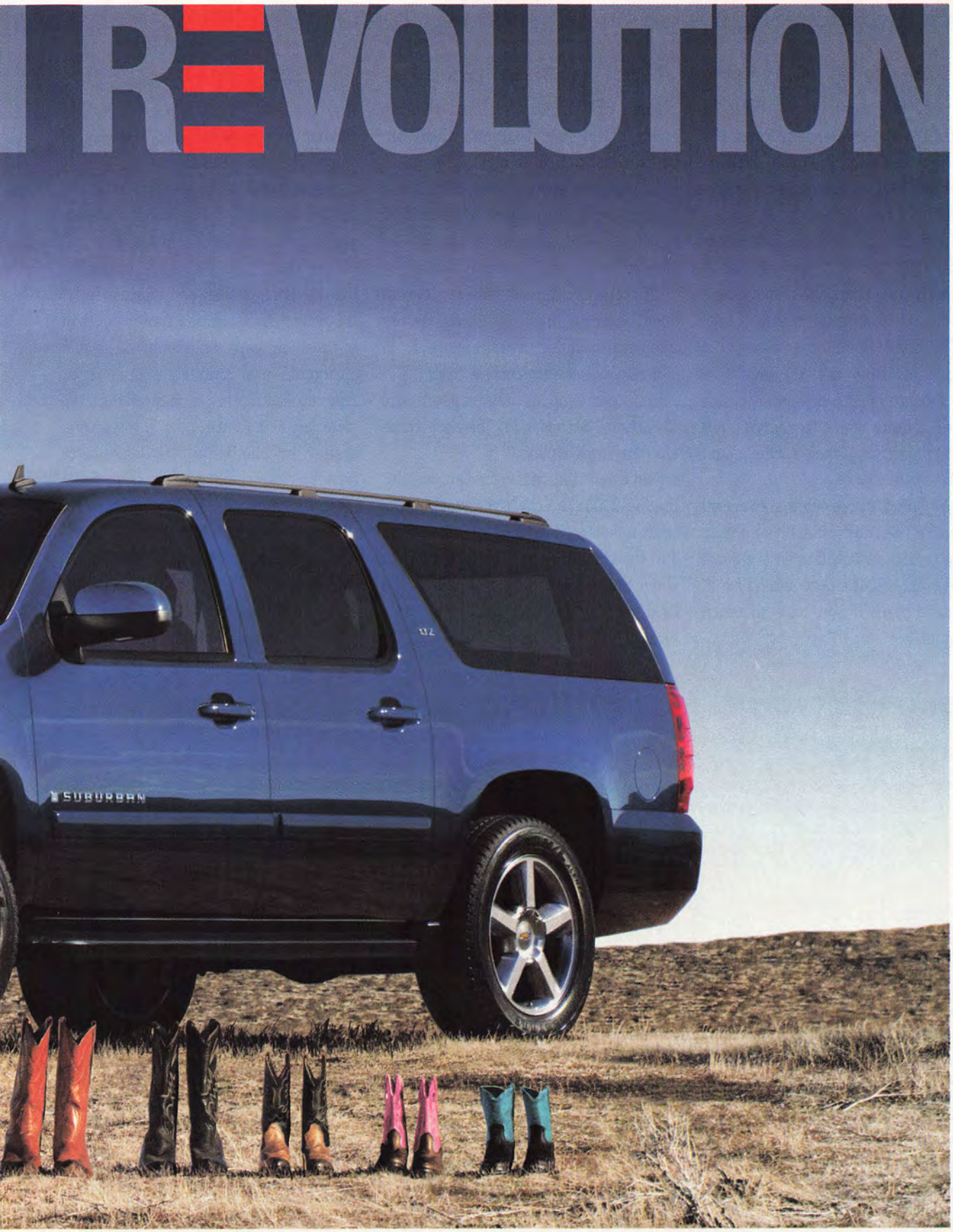

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Kickoff Change Promises to Jolt Field Position

It's only five yards, but to listen to some Big 12 Conference coaches, the NCAA's decision to push kickoffs back to the 30-yard line has earth-shaking ramifications.

Texas head football coach Mack Brown said, "it might change college football as much as any rule change in a long time."

It will add excitement to the game, Oklahoma coach Bob Stoops said.

Kicking off from the 30, Oklahoma State associate head coach Joe DeForest said, will require teams to change their whole approach to kickoff coverage and returns.

"You're going to see more starters on those units," DeForest said. "It's exciting because you know it will open the game up. The glass is half empty and half full. It's a little scary if you have to coach both units."

More kickoff returns would tend to create better field position, which can be expected to lead to more scoring.

"You can be kicking from the 30 into a wind, and a return man could catch it at the 20 and end up at the 40- or 50-yard line to start," Brown said.

"If you ask our defensive coaches about it, they throw up. If you ask our offensive coaches, they're pumped."

It might, however, carry a cost.

"You worry about more opportunity for injury," Stoops said, "because those are high-impact plays."

Two other rule changes revert to rules used in 2005: The clock will start on the snap following a change of possession, and the clock will start on kickoffs only when the ball is legally touched on the field of play (rather than when it is kicked).

New Scheduling Manual at KSU

What in the name of Bill Snyder is going on at Kansas State?

The Wildcats will open their season against Auburn and will face a challenging non-conference trip to Fresno State. Future dates are set with Louisville, UCLA, Miami, Oregon and Virginia Tech.

Snyder rebuilt Kansas State's football fortunes in part by relying on facing creampuff non-conference opponents, building confidence and accumulating victories. Ron Prince, now in his second season in Manhattan, is looking to schedule intersectional powers to focus national attention on his program.

"Going to play those kind of opponents will do nothing but benefit us," Prince said.

"We added Louisville late to our schedule last year, and that game gave us

Four-Year Standings

Bolstered by a 6-2 league mark in the regular season, Nebraska pulled to 18-14 in Big 12 play in the past four years ... and a good thing, too. Nobody else in the North is above .500 during that time, as Colorado slipped to a 2-6 conference mark last season.

In the South, Texas had matched Oklahoma from 2002 through 2005, but last year's two-game, two-step backward late in the season gave the Sooners the lead again.

Note that Texas Tech has the third-best overall record in this time frame.

Big 12 North	B12	Pct.	All	Pct.	Ch/Div	M	B	Comment
Nebraska	18-14	.562	32-18	.640	0/1	0	3	Suddenly, Huskers are back on top in division.
Missouri	15-17	.469	29-21	.580	0/0	0	3	Becoming a fixture among North contenders.
Kansas State	14-18	.438	27-23	.540	1/1	1	2	Taking another step in reclaiming respect.
Colorado	14-18	..438	22-28	.440	0/2	0	2	In ultra-balanced North, anything can happen.
Kansas	11-21	.344	23-25	.479	0/0	0	2	Gotta play defense, too, Jayhawks.
Iowa State	9-23	.281	20-28	.417	0/0	0	2	Cyclones start over with long way to go.

Big 12 South	B12	Pct.	All	Pct.	Ch/Div	M	B	Comment
Oklahoma	29-3	.906	43-10	.811	2/3	3	4	27-1 against Big 12 teams not named Longhorns.
Texas	28-4	.875	44-7	.863	1/1	2	4	26-2 against Big 12 teams not named Sooners.
Texas Tech	19-13	.594	33-17	.660	0/0	0	4	Monstrous comeback in bowl keeps paying off.
Texas A&M	15-17	.469	25-23	.521	0/0	0	2	Franchione finally gaining serious traction?
Oklahoma State	13-19	.406	27-22	.551	0/0	0	3	Gundy has reached the corner; heading up field.
Baylor	7-25	.219	15-31	.326	0/0	0	0	From 1 to 2 to 3 league wins ... can they get to 4?

Note: Ch=Championship or co-championship; M=BCS Bowls; B=Bowls

a chance to see where we were. We didn't win the game, but I believe that had we not played Louisville, we would not have won the Texas game later in the season.

"This year, we will play on both coasts in major markets. That's important from a recruiting standpoint, from a fan standpoint. Our goal is to win the Big 12 North, and we feel that we can accomplish that by playing this kind of schedule.

"Our kids are excited about the challenge of playing some of the best programs in the country."

From Worst to ... We'll See

Cornell Jackson faces an imposing task as he takes over coaching Baylor's running backs. The Bears ranked last in the nation in rushing in 2006, averaging a measly 40.2 yards per game.

"We've made more of a commitment to working on it in practice," said Baylor coach Guy Morriss.

"We hammered on them every day how we had to toughen up and get better. They had to submit to it because they didn't have much choice."

At Kansas, the Jayhawks also are trying to improve an aspect of their game that ranked as the nation's worst. No Division I-A team gave up more passing yards (269.1 per game) than Kansas in 2006.

"We've had some quarterbacks back there who could have read the newspaper and had a cup of coffee and then thrown the ball," Mangino said during spring drills. "I think we need to improve in the secondary, but your best pass defense is a pass rush. That is a high priority with us."

Extra Points

**Colorado switched last season's starting quarterback, Bernard Jackson, to a "slash" position to play receiver and running back, along with some quarterback-run plays.

**All-Big 12 cornerback Aqib Talib, who intercepted six passes for Kansas last season, saw duty at wide receiver during the spring. He might be able to do some double-duty, just like Charles Gordon did for the Jayhawks recently.

**Missouri quarterback Chase Daniel completed almost 80 percent of his passes (47 of 59) for 697 yards and eight touchdowns during spring practice.

**Donovan Woods, who started his Oklahoma State career as a quarterback, is now playing linebacker after a stint at safety last season. "He really loves it," said DeForest, OSU's associate head coach. "He feels more confident about himself at linebacker."

— Steve Pivovar

BIG 12 in the 2007 NFL Draft

For the second consecutive season, the Big 12 had the lowest number of draftees among the five biggest conferences. The SEC had 41, the ACC and Big Ten had 31, and the Pac-10 had 28.

The Big 12 also had 28, but had a worse per-team average, considering that the Pac-10 has two fewer teams.

The league did produce four first-round picks, but only early-entry Adrian Peterson, at No. 7, was among the top 12 players selected. Kansas and Texas A&M were shut out of the draft. For the Aggies, it marked the first time since 1974 that the NFL passed on their players.

Rd	Pick	Baylor	Pos.	Team
4	112	Sepulveda, Daniel	P	Pittsburgh
7	226	Wilson, C.J.	CB	Carolina

Rd	Pick	Colorado	Pos.	Team
6	193	Crosby, Mason	K	Green Bay
7	238	Wright, Abraham	DE	Miami

Rd	Pick	Kansas State	Pos.	Team
3	74	Figurs, Yamon	WR	Baltimore
6	186	Clayton, Thomas	RB	San Francisco
7	218	Diles, Zach	ILB	Houston

Rd	Pick	Missouri	Pos.	Team
4	113	Smith, Brian	DE	Jacksonville

Rd	Pick	Nebraska	Pos.	Team
1	13	Carriker, Adam	DE	St. Louis
2	63	Jackson, Brandon	RB	Green Bay
3	87	Bradley, Stewart	OLB	Philadelphia
4	104	Moore, Jay	DE	San Francisco

Rd	Pick	Oklahoma	Pos.	Team
1	7	Peterson, Adrian	RB	Minnesota
6	176	Alexander, Rufus	OLB	Minnesota
7	239	Ah You, C.J.	DE	Buffalo

Rd	Pick	Oklahoma State	Pos.	Team
4	132	McBean, Ryan	DE	Pittsburgh
6	209	Hilliard, Corey	OT	New England

Rd	Pick	Texas	Pos.	Team
1	19	Griffin, Michael	FS	Tennessee
1	20	Ross, Aaron	CB	N.Y. Giants
2	39	Blalock, Justin	OT	Atlanta
2	56	Crowder, Tim	DE	Denver
4	102	Robison, Brian	DE	Minnesota
5	147	Brown, Tarell	CB	San Francisco
6	183	Studdard, Kasey	G	Houston

Rd	Pick	Texas Tech	Pos.	Team
4	117	Ramirez, Manuel	G	Detroit
6	188	Filani, Joel	WR	Tennessee
7	242	Dawson, Keyunta	DE	Indianapolis

RATING THE BIG 12

QUARTERBACKS

1. Texas
2. Missouri
3. Texas A&M
4. Nebraska
5. Texas Tech
6. Kansas State
7. Oklahoma St.
8. Iowa State
9. Oklahoma
10. Kansas
11. Colorado
12. Baylor

Colt McCoy is entrenched as the Texas starter, but backups Sherrod Harris and John Chiles each had their moments during the spring. Coach Mack Brown seems inclined to give one of them quality time as a change-of-pace backup. Hey, it worked for Florida last season.

McCoy threw for 2,570 yards and tied the NCAA record for touchdown passes by a freshman (29). That's hardly a reassuring thought for opposing defensive backs for the next three seasons (or maybe just two).

Chase Daniel showed Missouri fans there was life after Brad Smith. In fact, the Tigers' offense might have operated more efficiently under Daniel, who finished second in the league in passing (3,227 yards) and total offense (3,906 yards).

Stephen McGee enjoyed the most accurate passing season in Texas A&M history as he completed 62 percent of his attempts and threw just two interceptions as a sophomore.

The league is filled with promising young quarterbacks, but Nebraska doesn't mind having Sam Keller's services for just one season. The Huskers are anticipating big things out of the transfer from Arizona State.

RUNNING BACKS

1. Texas A&M
2. Oklahoma
3. Oklahoma St.
4. Missouri
5. Texas Tech
6. Texas
7. Nebraska
8. Colorado
9. Kansas State
10 Baylor
11. Kansas
12. Iowa State

The Aggies boast the league's best 1-2 punch at running back in 274-pound sledge-hammer Jorvorskie Lane and speedster Mike Goodson.

Lane, a monster on the goal line, tied a 79-year-old school record for rushing touchdowns with 19. Goodson finished seventh in the league in rushing with 847 yards, the third-best season by a Texas A&M freshman.

Oklahoma, despite Adrian Peterson's departure for the NFL, shouldn't miss much of a beat with a deep group led by Allen Patrick and Chris Brown. Patrick, a converted defensive back, rushed for 761 yards, while Brown gained 343 as a true freshman.

Big things are expected from redshirt freshmen DeMarco Murray and Mossis Madu, who spent time during the spring working as slotbacks and inside receivers in an effort to maximize their touches as targets for shovel passes and bubble screens.

Dantrell Savage will return as Oklahoma State's featured back, but the Cowboys are also looking for a major impact from 235-pound Julius Crosslin.

Tony Temple headlines Missouri's effective running game after finishing second in the league with 1,061 yards. Shannon Woods, assuming he gets out of coach Mike Leach's doghouse, gives Texas Tech the best multi-purpose back in the league.

RECEIVERS

1. Oklahoma
2. Oklahoma St.
3. Missouri
4. Texas
5. Nebraska
6. Texas Tech
7. Texas A&M
8. Kansas State
9. Iowa State
10. Kansas
11. Colorado
12. Baylor

Malcolm Kelly has compiled the best numbers for a two-year receiver in Oklahoma history, and he is the leader of a receiver corps that perfectly complements the Sooners' deep stable of running backs.

The Sooners return 13 of the 14 players that caught passes last season, and that would have been 14 of 14 had Adrian Peterson not made an early exit to the NFL. At 6-4, 213, Kelly is a big target, but he also possesses acrobatic athleticism.

Adarius Bowman is the league's best big-play receiver, and he believes he'll be more effective minus the dozen or so pounds he lost while playing basketball last season as a walk-on for the Cowboys. Bowman averaged 19.7 yards on his 60 catches last season, and the emergence of young receivers could make him even more dangerous.

Missouri boasts one of the best tight end tandems in college football in Martin Rucker and Chase Coffman, who combined for 111 catches and 14 touchdowns last season. Starters Will Franklin and Tommy Saunders are back at wide receiver, while Jared Perry led all Big 12 freshmen with 37 catches.

Texas' receiving unit, led by Limas Sweed, Billy Pittman and Quan Cosby, is the best Mack Brown has had in Austin.

OFFENSIVE LINE

1. Texas A&M
2. Oklahoma
3. Missouri
4. Nebraska
5. Kansas State
6. Texas
7. Colorado
8. Oklahoma St.
9. Kansas
10. Texas Tech
11. Baylor
12. Iowa State

With center Cody Wallace anchoring Texas A&M's line, it's easy to see why the Aggies consider this unit the strength of this team. Wallace, a second-team All-Big 12 pick last season, broke his own school record in the squat with a lift of 740 pounds, a 60-pound improvement over last season.

Wallace, Kirk Elder, Travis Schneider and Corey Clark are returning starters, while Yemi Babalola appears set to re-establish himself after an injury-plagued sophomore season. Chris Yoder, a freshman All-American in 2004, also brings starting experience.

Oklahoma will put one of its biggest lines on the field in 2007, and the group could rank as one of its best by the end of the season. The unit must replace All-Big 12 tackle Chris Messner, but there is extensive starting experience across the line, which is joined by junior college All-American Phil Loadholt.

Four-year starters Adam Spieker and Tyler Luellen are among Missouri's three returning regulars. Matt Slauson headlines a Nebraska unit that has four players who made at least six starts last season. The Huskers have been plagued by inconsistent line play in recent years, but this group appears capable of playing at a higher level.

Aggies and Sooners Strong Along Both Lines

DEFENSIVE LINE

1. Kansas
2. Oklahoma
3. Texas A&M
4. Kansas State
5. Texas
6. Oklahoma St.
7. Colorado
8. Missouri
9. Baylor
10. Nebraska
11. Texas Tech
12. Iowa State

Kansas, which yielded just one 100-yard game to an opposing running back in 2007, returns one of the league's best linemen in senior James McClinton. He registered 51 tackles, including 16 for loss and six sacks last season.

McClinton is flanked by Russell Brorsen and Jon Larson, who showed well in limited action last season.

Oklahoma needs to shore up the end positions as fixtures C.J. Ah You, Larry Birdine and Calvin Thibodeaux are gone, but the middle looks solid with the return of Steven Coleman, DeMarcus Granger and Cory Bennett.

Texas A&M has a pair of solid starters in end Chris Harrington, who notched 7.5 sacks last season, and tackle Red Bryant, but will still need to get step-up performances from Henry Smith and Cyril Obiozor.

Kansas State's Ian Campbell was a defensive end who is now wearing the tag of outside linebacker in a new 3-4 scheme. Regardless, expect him to be in the front of the action after recording 11.5 sacks last season.

The Wildcats have other good candidates for the revamped look.

LINEBACKERS

1. Nebraska
2. Kansas
3. Iowa State
4. Texas
5. Oklahoma St.
6. Colorado
7. Oklahoma
8. Baylor
9. Texas A&M
10. Kansas State
11. Texas Tech
12. Missouri

Nebraska must replace strongside linebacker Stewart Bradley, but the Huskers are loaded with talent at this position.

All-Big 12 pick Bo Ruud shifts from the weak side to take Bradley's spot, with Steve Octavien expected to move full time into Ruud's old position. Although he was hampered by injury, Octavien flashed play-making potential in limited action last season. Corey McKeon also battled injuries last season, but will be looking to regain the breakout form he showed in 2005.

Lance Brandenburgh has established himself as a capable backup, while Phillip Dillard is back from a knee injury that sidelined him in 2005.

Challenging Nebraska for unit supremacy is Kansas, led by middle linebacker Mike Rivera, the team's leading tackler in 2006. Providing support for the multi-talented Rivera is Joe Mortensen, James Holt and Arist Wright, while a group of talented newcomers add depth and competition to the group.

One of the few bright spots at Iowa State is All-Big 12 linebacker Alvin Bowen, who recorded a national-best average of 12.9 tackles per game. He had games in which he notched 20, 18, 17 and 15 tackles.

SECONDARY

1. Oklahoma
2. Kansas State
3. Texas A&M
4. Colorado
5. Kansas
6. Texas
7. Nebraska
8. Missouri
9. Oklahoma St.
10. Texas Tech
11. Baylor
12. Iowa State

The Sooners are loaded in the secondary with a deep and talented group that includes three players who earned second-team all-league honors — Marcus Walker, Nic Harris and Reggie Smith. Also returning is Lendy Holmes, D.J. Wolfe and Darien Williams, giving all sorts of mix-and-match pieces.

Kansas State has a big-time playmaker in Marcus Watts, a second-team All-Big 12 pick in spite of making just five starts because of injuries. Sophomore Joshua Moore is a promising corner, and junior college All-American Gary Chandler is expected to make an immediate contribution at safety.

Texas A&M returns starters in Devin Gregg, Jordan Peterson and Danny Gorrer from a unit that ranked fourth in the league in pass defense — an incredible improvement from their 2005 ranking of 117th in the nation.

Arkeith Brown, Marquis Carpenter and Jordan Pugh are expected to push Peterson and Gorrer as the Aggies will be looking to avoid late-game breakdowns in the secondary that cost them wins against Texas Tech and Nebraska.

Colorado's Terrence Wheatley has established himself as one of the best cover corners in the league, while corner Aqib Talib is expected to anchor a much-improved unit.

SPECIAL TEAMS

1. Oklahoma
2. Missouri
3. Oklahoma St.
4. Iowa State
5. Texas A&M
6. Kansas State
7. Texas
8. Kansas
9. Texas Tech
10. Nebraska
11. Colorado
12. Baylor

Oklahoma has all of its special teams personnel from a season ago, including second-team All-Big 12 kicker Garrett Hartley. He made 19 of 20 field goal attempts, and the Groza Award finalist also converted 49 of 50 PATs.

The Sooners also return punters Michael Cohen and Mike Knall, while the return game remains in good stead with Reggie Smith handling punts, and Smith and Juaquin Iglesias teaming up on kickoffs. Each had a return for a touchdown last season.

Walk-on Jeff Wolfert came out of nowhere to set Missouri records for field goals (18) and points (99) last season, and he's back. What's more, Adam Crossett will again concentrate on the punting and kickoffs.

Oklahoma State's Matt Fodge, a second-team all-conference selection, finished third in the Big 12 in punting with a 44.9-yard average. The Cowboys also have a dependable kicker in junior Jason Ricks, while return specialist Perrish Cox is one of the most dangerous in the league. He finished 12th nationally in punt returns (12.8-yard average) and 35th in kickoff returns (23.8-yard average).

THE RACE

Texas beat Oklahoma 28-10 in the Red River Shootout, as freshman Colt McCoy threw two touchdown passes in the second half. Cornerback Aaron Ross pounced on a fumbled lateral for a touchdown and then ended OU's final two drives with interceptions.

That was supposed to be that.

Yep ... Texas sure was cruising to the Big 12 Championship Game (and the presumptive league title), right until the part where neck and shoulder injuries hit McCoy late in the regular season. Kansas State and Texas A&M pounced for narrow victories in the final two games of the regular season, handing the South to Oklahoma, with one league loss.

In the North, Nebraska took control with a 34-20 victory over Missouri on Nov. 4, clinching the division a week later with a come-from-behind 28-27 decision at Texas A&M.

THE CHAMPION

Oklahoma was never in the national title discussion, stung with two defeats by the first week of October (even if the Sooner Nation still refuses to recognize that robbed-by-replay game at Oregon).

If not national championship timber, the 2006 Sooners were resilient, getting solid play from Paul Thompson after quarterback Rhett Bomar was kicked off the team in the offseason, and going 7-0 when star running back Adrian Peterson was out with injury.

For all the good things, such as the fourth Big 12 championship in seven seasons, the 11-3 Sooners might be remembered most for the losses — the controversy in Oregon and the wild overtime Fiesta Bowl against Boise State.

THE STARS

Offensive Player of the Year: Zac Taylor, QB, Nebraska

The clearest sign yet that these aren't the same old Cornhuskers. Taylor took control of Bill Callahan's West Coast offense, leading North champ Nebraska to a No. 14 rating in total offense. He completed 233 of 391 passes for 3,197 yards with 26 touchdowns and eight interceptions.

Defensive Player of the Year: Rufus Alexander, LB, Oklahoma

The Sooners have had two Butkus Award winners in the past six seasons — Rocky Calmus (2001) and Teddy Lehman (2003) — and Alexander wasn't far off their pace. He made 118 tackles, including 12 for loss, and caused four fumbles.

Coach of the Year: Bob Stoops, Oklahoma

Stoops kept the team together through offseason problems, a controversial loss, a setback against its chief rival, and an injury to his biggest star. In all, it might have been his best coaching job, which is saying something as this is his third conference Coach of the Year award.

THE BOWLS

Consider that only three Big 12 teams were not bowl eligible ... which means nine of the dozen teams had a .500 season or better. That, however, speaks to the weakness of the league's non-conference schedule (18-1 against Sun Belt or non-Division I-A opponents; but just 6-12 against foes from BCS leagues). The postseason highlights had to be Texas Tech's amazing 31-point comeback against Minnesota, and OSU's rally to victory over Alabama.

Tostitos Fiesta	*Boise State 43, Oklahoma 42 (OT)*
Cotton	*Auburn 17, Nebraska 14*
Alamo	*Texas 26, Iowa 24*
Insight	*Texas Tech 44, Minnesota 41*
Sun	*Oregon State 39, Missouri 38*
Holiday	*California 45, Texas A&M 10*
Texas	*Rutgers 37, Kansas State 10*
Independence	*Oklahoma State 34, Alabama 31*

ALL-BIG 12 TEAM

*as selected by the league coaches

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Zac Taylor	Nebraska
RB	Jon Cornish	Kansas
RB	Adrian Peterson	Oklahoma
FB	Dane Todd	Nebraska
WR	Adarius Bowman	Oklahoma State
WR	Joel Filani	Texas Tech
WR	Limas Sweed	Texas
TE	Martin Rucker	Missouri
OL	Justin Blalock	Texas
OL	Kasey Studdard	Texas
OL	Corey Hilliard	Oklahoma State
OL	Joel Clinger	Missouri
OL	Chris Messner	Oklahoma
PK	Mason Crosby	Colorado
KR/PR	Yamon Figurs	Kansas State

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Chase Daniel	Missouri
RB	Jorvorskie Lane	Texas A&M
RB	Brandon Jackson	Nebraska
FB	Brandon McAnderson	Kansas
FB	Chris Alexander	Texas A&M
WR	Malcolm Kelly	Oklahoma
WR	Maurice Purify	Nebraska
WR	Dominique Zeigler	Baylor
TE	Martellus Bennett	Texas A&M
TE	Chase Coffman	Missouri
OL	Scott Stephenson	Iowa State
OL	David Ochoa	Kansas
OL	Cody Wallace	Texas A&M
OL	Lyle Sendlein	Texas
OL	Glenn January	Texas Tech
PK	Garrett Hartley	Oklahoma
KR/PR	Aaron Ross	Texas

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	C.J. Ah You	Oklahoma
DL	Adam Carriker	Nebraska
DL	Ian Campbell	Kansas State
DL	Abraham Wright	Colorado
DL	Larry Birdine	Oklahoma
LB	Rufus Alexander	Oklahoma
LB	Marcus Bacon	Missouri
LB	Bo Ruud	Nebraska
DB	Michael Griffin	Texas
DB	Aaron Ross	Texas
DB	Aqib Talib	Kansas
DB	Melvin Bullitt	Texas A&M
DB	Terrence Wheatley	Colorado
P	Daniel Sepulveda	Baylor

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Keyunta Dawson	Texas Tech
DL	Brian Smith	Missouri
DL	Tim Crowder	Texas
DL	Victor DeGrate	Oklahoma State
DL	Jay Moore	Nebraska
LB	Brandon Archer	Kansas State
LB	Alvin Bowen	Iowa State
LB	Joe Pawelek	Baylor
DB	Marcus Watts	Kansas State
DB	Marcus Walker	Oklahoma
DB	David Overstreet	Missouri
DB	Nic Harris	Oklahoma
DB	Reggie Smith	Oklahoma
P	Matt Fodge	Oklahoma State

THE STANDINGS

NORTH

TEAM	B12	Pct.	PF	PA	All	Pct.	PF	PA
Nebraska	6-2	.750	236	173	9-5	.643	428	256
Missouri	4-4	.500	214	178	8-5	.615	391	254
Kansas State	4-4	.500	188	218	7-6	.538	296	309
Kansas	3-5	.375	234	225	6-6	.500	348	306
Colorado	2-6	.250	160	199	2-10	.167	196	267
Iowa State	1-7	.125	120	262	4-8	.333	226	369

SOUTH

TEAM	B12	Pct.	PF	PA	All	Pct.	PF	PA
Oklahoma	7-1	.875	208	121	11-3	.786	424	242
Texas	6-2	.750	270	173	10-3	.769	467	238
Texas A&M	5-3	.375	193	174	9-4	.692	362	267
Texas Tech	4-4	.500	240	235	8-5	.615	422	326
Oklahoma State	3-5	.375	264	243	7-6	.538	458	333
Baylor	3-5	.375	194	320	4-8	.333	283	391

2006 BIG 12 LEADERS

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PASSING EFFICIENCY	G	ATT	CMP	PCT	INT	YDS	TD	RATING
1. Colt McCoy, Texas	13	318	217	7	68.2	2570	29	161.8
2. Bobby Reid, Oklahoma State	13	267	148	11	55.4	2266	24	148.1
3. Zac Taylor, Nebraska	14	391	233	8	59.6	3197	26	146.1
4. Graham Harrell, Texas Tech	13	617	412	11	66.8	4555	38	145.5
5. Chase Daniel, Missouri	13	452	287	10	63.5	3527	28	145.1
6. Paul Thompson, Oklahoma	14	336	204	11	60.7	2667	22	142.4
7. Stephen McGee, Texas A&M	13	313	194	2	62.0	2295	12	134.9
8. Shawn Bell, Baylor	10	383	241	10	62.9	2582	19	130.7
9. Kerry Meier, Kansas	9	184	104	10	56.5	1193	13	123.4
10. Bret Meyer, Iowa State	12	374	211	12	56.4	2546	12	117.8

INTERCEPTIONS	G	INT	YDS	TD	INT/PG
1. Aqib Talib, Kansas	10	6	82	0	0.60
2. Aaron Ross, Texas	13	6	7	0	0.46
3. Terrence Wheatley, Colorado	12	5	26	0	0.42
4. C.J. Wilson, Baylor	12	4	98	1	0.33
4. Marcus Watts, Kansas State	9	3	68	0	0.33
6. Michael Griffin, Texas	13	4	41	0	0.31
7. Andrew Shanle, Nebraska	14	4	19	0	0.29
7. Nic Harris, Oklahoma	14	4	11	0	0.29
9. Reggie Smith, Oklahoma	14	3	94	1	0.21
10. Darcel McBath, Texas Tech	13	3	66	0	0.23

RUSHING	G	ATT	NET	AVG	TD	YDS/G
1. Jon Cornish, Kansas	12	250	1457	5.8	8	121.4
2. Tony Temple, Missouri	13	193	1063	5.5	7	81.8
3. Dantrell Savage, Oklahoma State	11	126	820	6.5	8	74.5
4. Shannon Woods, Texas Tech	13	152	926	6.1	10	71.2
5. Brandon Jackson, Nebraska	14	188	989	5.3	8	70.6
6. Jamaal Charles, Texas	12	155	831	5.4	7	69.2
7. Mike Goodson, Texas A&M	13	127	847	6.7	4	65.2
8. Hugh Charles, Colorado	12	139	779	5.6	1	64.9
9. Allen Patrick, Oklahoma	12	170	761	4.5	4	63.4
10. Bernard Jackson, Colorado	12	155	677	4.4	7	56.4

SCORING	G	TD	XP-XPA	FGM-FGA	PTS	PTS/GM
1. Jorvorskie Lane, Texas A&M	13	19	0-0	0-0	114	8.8
2. Alex Trlica, Texas Tech	12	0	51-51	15-21	96	8.0
3. Jeff Wolfert, Missouri	13	0	45-45	18-20	99	7.6
4. Garret Hartley, Oklahoma	14	0	49-50	19-20	106	7.6
5. Jason Ricks, Oklahoma State	12	0	47-49	10-12	77	6.4
6. Jeff Snodgrass, Kansas State	13	0	32-32	17-24	83	6.4
7. Scott Webb, Kansas	12	0	37-39	13-18	76	6.3
7. Mason Crosby, Colorado	12	0	19-19	19-28	76	6.3
9. Joel Filani, Texas Tech	13	13	0-0	0-0	78	6.0
10. Robert Johnson, Texas Tech	12	11	0-0	0-0	68	5.7

TOTAL OFFENSE	G	RUSH	PASS	PLAYS	TOTAL	YDS/G
1. Graham Harrell, Texas Tech	13	-66	4555	649	4489	345.3
2. Chase Daniel, Missouri	13	379	3527	599	3906	300.5
3. Shawn Bell, Baylor	10	-137	2582	410	2445	244.5
4. Stephen McGee, Texas A&M	13	666	2295	459	2961	227.8
5. ,Bret Meyer, Iowa State	12	177	2546	511	2723	226.9
6. Zac Taylor, Nebraska	14	-32	3197	451	3165	226.1
7. Bobby Reid, Oklahoma State	13	500	2266	386	2766	212.8
8. Colt McCoy, Texas	13	170	2570	386	2740	210.8
9. PaulThompson, Oklahoma	14	151	2667	407	2818	201.3
10. Kerry Meier, Kansas	9	346	1193	283	1539	171.0

PUNTING	G	NO	YDS	AVG
1. Daniel Sepulveda, Baylor	12	66	3068	46.5
2. Alex Reyes, Texas Tech	13	43	1943	45.2
3. Matt Fodge, Oklahoma State	13	50	2244	44.9
4. Justin Brantly, Texas A&M	13	50	2215	44.3
5. Matthew DiLallo, Colorado	12	47	2056	43.7
6. Tim Reyer, Kansas State	13	61	2566	42.1
7. Mike Brandtner, Iowa State	12	56	2309	41.2
8. Michael Cohen, Oklahoma	13	51	2091	41.0
9. Greg Johnson, Texas	12	46	1877	40.8
10. Adam Crossett, Missouri	13	47	1852	39.4

RECEIVING	G	REC	YDS	TD	YDS/G
1. Joel Filani, Texas Tech	13	91	1300	13	100.0
2. Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State	13	60	1181	12	90.8
3. William Franklin, Missouri	11	48	829	6	75.4
4. Robert Johnson, Texas Tech	12	89	871	11	72.6
5. Malcolm Kelly, Oklahoma	14	62	993	10	70.9
6. Dominique Zeigler, Baylor	11	54	741	3	67.4
7. Trent Shelton, Baylor	12	53	802	8	66.8
8. Limas Sweed, Texas	13	46	801	12	61.6
9. Todd Blythe, Iowa State	9	34	484	8	53.8
10. D'Juan Woods, Oklahoma State	13	41	647	5	49.8

TEAM STATISTICS

TOTAL OFFENSE	G	PLAYS	YDS	AVG	TD	YDS/G
1. Texas Tech	13	875	5834	6.7	52	448.8
2. Missouri	13	922	5533	6.0	45	425.6
3. Nebraska	14	965	5804	6.0	59	414.6
4. Oklahoma State	13	843	5327	6.3	55	409.8
5. Texas A&M	13	870	5166	5.9	45	397.4
6. Texas	13	854	5089	6.0	55	391.5
7. Kansas	12	801	4491	5.6	39	374.2
8. Oklahoma	14	898	5162	5.7	47	368.7
9. Iowa State	12	779	3814	4.9	28	317.8
10. Kansas State	13	787	4098	5.2	26	315.2
11. Baylor	12	745	3782	5.1	33	315.2
12. Colorado	12	715	3497	4.9	19	291.4

TOTAL DEFENSE	G	PLAYS	YDS	AVG	TD	YDS/G
1. Oklahoma	14	858	4020	4.7	25	287.1
2. Texas	13	755	3878	5.1	29	298.3
3. Missouri	13	866	4163	4.8	30	320.2
4. Texas A&M	13	767	4194	5.5	34	322.6
5. Nebraska	14	882	4646	5.3	31	331.9
6. Texas Tech	13	876	4335	4.9	36	333.5
7. Colorado	12	800	4091	5.1	34	340.9
8. Kansas State	13	857	4495	5.2	33	345.8
9. Oklahoma State	13	845	4733	5.6	37	364.1
10. Kansas	12	843	4537	5.4	35	378.1
11. Iowa State	12	778	4707	6.1	45	392.2
12. Baylor	12	825	4898	5.9	43	408.2

KICKOFF RETURNS	G	NO	YDS	TD	AVG
1. Kansas State	13	36	977	3	27.1
2. Texas A&M	13	25	652	1	26.1
3. Oklahoma State	13	50	1231	2	24.6
4. Texas	13	26	603	0	23.2
5. Baylor	12	45	1027	0	22.8
6. Oklahoma	14	37	844	1	22.8
7. Kansas	12	45	971	0	21.6
8. Iowa State	12	40	737	0	18.4
9. Colorado	12	32	583	0	18.2
10. Nebraska	14	28	488	0	17.4
11. Missouri	13	24	410	0	17.1
12. Texas Tech	13	37	587	0	15.9

SCORING OFFENSE	G	TD	XP	2XP	DXP	FG	S	PTS	AVG
1. Texas	13	63	60	0	0	9	1	467	35.9
2. Oklahoma State	13	61	57	1	0	11	0	458	35.2
3. Texas Tech	13	54	51	1	0	15	0	422	32.5
4. Nebraska	14	59	55	1	0	5	1	428	30.6
5. Oklahoma	14	52	49	1	0	19	2	424	30.3
6. Missouri	13	48	45	0	0	18	2	391	30.1
7. Kansas	12	44	37	2	0	13	2	348	29.0
8. Texas A&M	13	46	36	4	0	14	0	362	27.8
9. Baylor	12	36	32	0	0	11	1	283	23.6
10. Kansas State	13	35	33	1	0	17	0	296	22.8
11. Iowa State	12	29	24	1	0	8	1	226	18.8
12. Colorado	12	20	19	0	0	19	0	196	16.3

SCORING DEFENSE	G	TD	XP	2XP	DXP	FG	S	PTS	AVG
1. Oklahoma	14	29	28	1	0	12	1	242	17.3
2. Nebraska	14	32	26	1	0	12	0	256	18.3
3. Texas	13	31	28	0	0	8	0	238	18.3
4. Missouri	13	32	29	2	0	9	1	254	19.5
5. Texas A&M	13	34	32	0	0	9	2	267	20.5
6. Colorado	12	34	31	0	0	10	1	267	22.2
7. Kansas State	13	38	36	0	0	15	0	309	23.8
8. Texas Tech	13	39	35	0	0	19	0	326	25.1
9. Kansas	12	38	25	3	0	15	1	306	25.5
10. Oklahoma State	13	41	35	2	0	16	0	333	25.6
11. Iowa State	12	47	42	2	0	13	1	369	30.8
12. Baylor	12	51	48	1	0	11	1	391	32.6

PUNT RETURNS	G	NO	YDS	TD	AVG
1. Kansas	12	24	324	2	13.5
2. Kansas State	13	30	391	3	13.0
3. Texas	13	28	362	3	12.9
4. Oklahoma State	13	34	404	0	11.9
5. Iowa State	12	20	213	1	10.6
6. Texas Tech	13	42	377	0	9.0
7. Nebraska	14	36	294	0	8.2
8. Texas A&M	13	22	175	0	8.0
9. Oklahoma	14	38	299	1	7.9
10. Baylor	12	30	228	0	7.6
11. Missouri	13	25	187	0	7.5
12. Colorado	12	22	123	0	5.6

RUSHING OFFENSE	G	ATT	NET	AVG	TD	YDS/G
1. Oklahoma State	13	522	2704	5.2	28	208.0
2. Texas A&M	13	540	2689	5.0	32	206.8
3. Oklahoma	14	558	2480	4.4	25	177.1
4. Kansas	12	438	2119	4.8	20	176.6
5. Colorado	12	461	2075	4.5	12	172.9
6. Nebraska	14	554	2387	4.3	27	170.5
7. Texas	13	483	2114	4.4	24	162.6
8. Missouri	13	457	1943	4.3	16	149.5
9. Kansas State	13	372	1497	4.0	16	115.2
10. Iowa State	12	401	1221	3.0	16	101.8
11. Texas Tech	13	219	1031	4.7	13	79.3
12. Baylor	12	235	482	2.1	9	40.2

RUSHING DEFENSE	G	ATT	NET	AVG	TD	YDS/G
1. Texas	13	344	807	2.3	8	62.1
2. Oklahoma	14	424	1382	3.3	10	98.7
3. Kansas	12	373	1308	3.5	13	109.0
4. Colorado	12	410	1349	3.3	12	112.4
5. Nebraska	14	436	1632	3.7	14	116.6
6. Texas A&M	13	399	1717	4.3	20	132.1
7. Missouri	13	466	1749	3.8	11	134.5
8. Oklahoma State	13	473	1907	4.0	17	146.7
9. Kansas State	13	473	1934	4.1	15	148.8
10. Texas Tech	13	511	1964	3.8	17	151.1
11. Iowa State	12	404	1845	4.6	19	153.8
12. Baylor	12	461	2293	5.0	19	191.1

NET PUNTING	G	NO	YDS	AVG	TB	RET	YDS	AVG	NET AVG
1. Baylor	12	68	3111	45.8	8	31	298	4.4	39.0
2. Texas Tech	13	44	1943	44.2	6	21	136	3.1	38.3
3. Texas	13	53	2112	39.8	1	21	100	1.9	37.6
4. Nebraska	14	68	2660	39.1	3	18	73	1.1	37.2
5. Texas A&M	13	52	2286	43.0	6	25	242	4.7	37.0
6. Oklahoma	14	62	2460	39.7	5	20	83	1.3	36.7
7. Colorado	12	56	2353	42.0	0	32	299	5.3	36.7
8. Iowa State	12	56	2309	41.2	5	27	218	3.9	35.5
9. Kansas State	13	63	2566	40.7	6	25	213	3.4	35.4
10. Kansas	12	59	2276	38.6	6	18	123	2.1	34.5
11. Oklahoma State	13	52	2264	43.5	4	28	402	7.7	34.3
12. Missouri	13	48	1852	38.6	6	17	188	3.9	32.2

PASSING OFFENSE	G	ATT	CMP	INT	PCT	YDS	TD	YDS/G
1. Texas Tech	13	656	438	11	66.8	4803	39	369.5
2. Missouri	13	465	291	11	62.6	3590	29	276.2
3. Baylor	12	510	307	17	60.2	3300	24	275.0
4. Nebraska	14	411	244	8	59.4	3417	32	244.1
5. Texas	13	371	244	9	65.8	2975	31	228.8
6. Iowa State	12	378	213	12	56.3	2593	12	216.1
7. Oklahoma State	13	321	174	11	54.2	2623	27	201.8
8. Kansas State.	13	415	214	20	51.6	2601	10	200.1
9. Kansas	12	363	203	19	55.9	2372	9	197.7
10. Oklahoma	14	340	205	11	60.3	2682	22	191.6
11. Texas A&M	13	330	202	4	61.2	2477	13	190.5
12. Colorado	12	254	119	8	46.9	142	27	118.5

PASSING DEFENSE	G	ATT	CMP	INT	PCT	YDS	AVG	TD	YDS/G
1. Texas Tech	13	365	213	11	58.4	2371	6.5	19	182.4
2. Missouri	13	400	231	13	57.7	2414	6.0	19	185.7
3. Oklahoma	14	434	225	18	51.8	2638	6.1	15	188.4
4. Texas A&M	13	368	203	11	55.2	2477	6.7	14	190.5
5. Kansas State	13	384	224	10	58.3	2561	6.7	18	197.0
6. Nebraska	14	446	238	12	53.4	3014	6.8	17	215.3
7. Baylor	12	364	210	16	57.7	2605	7.2	24	217.1
8. Oklahoma State	13	372	226	10	60.8	2826	7.6	20	217.4
9. Colorado	12	390	261	12	66.9	2742	7.0	22	228.5
10. Texas	13	411	239	13	58.2	3071	7.5	21	236.2
11. Iowa State	12	374	271	6	72.5	2862	7.7	26	238.5
12. Kansas	12	470	248	12	52.8	3229	6.9	22	269.1

TURNOVERS	G	+FUM	+INT	+TOT	-FUM	-INT	-TOT	MAR
1. Texas	13	19	13	32	14	9	23	+9
1. Texas A&M	13	11	11	22	9	4	13	+9
3. Colorado	12	12	12	24	8	8	16	+8
4. Oklahoma State	13	16	10	26	10	11	21	+5
5. Missouri	13	15	13	28	15	11	26	+2
6. Nebraska	14	13	12	25	17	8	25	+0
6. Texas Tech	13	13	11	24	13	11	24	+0
8. Oklahoma	14	14	18	32	22	11	33	-1
9. Kansas State	13	17	10	27	10	20	30	-3
10. Iowa State	12	9	6	15	8	12	20	-5
10. Kansas	12	16	12	28	14	19	33	-5
12. Baylor	12	11	16	27	17	17	34	-7

Youthful QBs Lead League Resurgence

By Jeff McDonald

The 2006 season often was spectacular for Texas Tech quarterback Graham Harrell.

Taking control of the Red Raiders' video-game passing offense for the first time, Harrell set a Tech sophomore record with 4,555 passing yards, threw for 38 touchdowns, and led the team to the biggest bowl rally in Division I-A history.

It was also the year that Harrell got booed by his home fans.

In a 38-21 home loss to Missouri in early October, he threw two early interceptions returned for touchdowns, lost three fumbles and left the field at Jones Stadium to a chorus of catcalls.

If it's any consolation, the Red Raiders — who finished 8-5 for their poorest record since 2003 — weren't the only Big 12 team strapped onto the young quarterback rollercoaster. Seven teams in the league were guided by either a freshman or sophomore quarterback in his first full season as a full-time starter.

That's a big reason why Harrell can choose to view his best-of-times, worst-of-times sophomore season in a philosophical light.

"I have been playing for a year, and I learned a lot," said Harrell, the first non-senior to start at quarterback for Tech since 2001. "We had our ups and downs in that year, but that's part of it. Coming into this year, I think we are all excited."

Same goes for much of the rest of the Big 12.

No position can determine the fortunes of a football team quite like quarterback. Have a good one, and you're bound to enjoy success. Have a bad one, and you're in for disappointment.

Have a young one, and you're apt to endure a little bit of both.

To wit:

Kansas State. The Wildcats handed the ball to true freshman Josh Freeman five games into the season. He was almost flawless in leading K-State to a 45-42 upset of Texas in the second-to-last week of the regular season. Just a week later, however, Freeman coughed up a hairball in the form of six turnovers in a 39-20 loss to rival Kansas.

Texas A&M. Behind sophomore Stephen McGee, the Aggies won eight of their first nine games and later broke a seven-year drought against archrival Texas. They also dropped three conference games by a combined six points and got steamrolled in the Holiday Bowl by California, 45-10.

Oklahoma State. Sophomore Bobby Reid was good enough one week to engineer a 41-29 victory over Nebraska. The next, he was erratic in a 36-10 loss at Texas, completing just 11 of 28 passes for 123 yards and two interceptions.

The list of good and bad from the Big 12's stable of young guns — Texas' Colt McCoy, Missouri's Chase Daniel and Kansas' Kerry Meier —

Chase Daniel

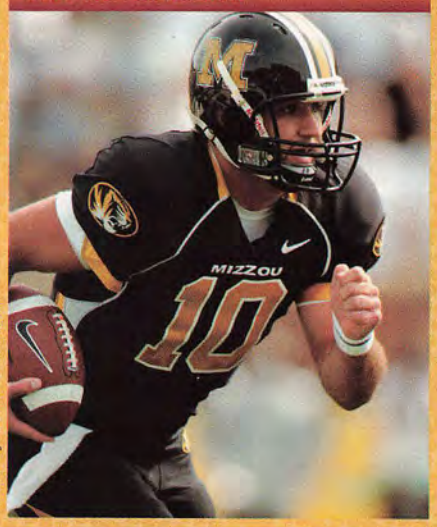


Photo By: John Williamson

Graham Harrell

Photo By: John Williamson

Colt McCoy

Photo By: John Williamson

Stephen McGee

Photo By: John Williamson

QUARTERBACK COMPARISON

The Big 12 has only one senior starter who has experience at his current school, but the league is now full of sophomores and juniors who know their way around the college football block.

Team	Projected starter, Yr.	Starts
Baylor	Michael Machen, Sr.	1*
Colorado	Cody Hawkins, Fr.	0
Iowa State	Bret Meyer, Sr.	36
Kansas	Kerry Meier, So.	8
Kansas State	Josh Freeman, So.	8
Missouri	Chase Daniel, Jr.	13
Nebraska	Sam Keller, Sr.	8**
Oklahoma	Sam Bradford, Fr.	0
Oklahoma State	Bobby Reid, Jr.	18
Texas	Colt McCoy, So.	13
Texas A&M	Stephen McGee, Jr.	14
Texas Tech	Graham Harrell, Jr.	13

* At Kent State | ** At Arizona State

goes on and on.

Inexperience at the quarterback position was a primary reason the Big 12 struggled through an up-and-down campaign last year. The league was 0-10 against out-of-conference foes that finished the season ranked in the Associated Press Top 25. Only three Big 12 teams — Texas, Oklahoma State and Texas Tech — won a bowl game.

"Any time a division or a conference is starting over at quarterback, it adds a little air of uncertainty to what's going to happen, as opposed to having the Vince Youngs, the Reggie McNeals, the Brad Smiths and all those kinds of people back," Texas A&M coach Dennis Franchione said.

"That is a story that has to develop as the season goes on, moreso than maybe in other years."

It is little coincidence that the teams that reached the Big 12 title game last year — Oklahoma and Nebraska — did so with senior signal callers.

Game experience seems to be an unflinching prerequisite for success.

Texas' McCoy seemed to be the notable exception to the rule last year, taking over for Longhorn legend Vince Young and throwing for 2,570 yards and a national freshman record 29 touchdowns.

In a 10-3 season, two of Texas' losses came with its rookie quarterback sidelined by or hampered by a pinched nerve in his neck and shoulder.

Other teams in the Big 12 saddled with young signal callers could not count on such consistency.

In the wake of the Big 12's mercurial 2006 season, the greatest cause for optimism among many teams is this:

The freshmen who started at quarterback are now sophomores. The sophomores are now juniors.

"There's no question there's a growth at the quarterback position that is unique," Texas offensive coordinator Greg Davis said. "You can't give them experience on the practice field. As they play, they grow, and it should be reflected in their team's play."

Some of those quarterbacks appear poised on the precipice of greatness.

McCoy, of course, stands at the head of that list. He fought off Jevan Snead, a more highly touted true freshman, for the starting job coming out of summer drills and never looked back. By season's end, he had gained National Freshman of the Year honors.

Snead has since transferred to Ole Miss in search of a clearer path to playing time. McCoy, meanwhile, ought to enter the upcoming season somewhere on the list of potential candidates for the Heisman Trophy.

"Coming into (last) year, I knew I'd be all right," said McCoy, the only freshman in Texas history to lead his team to 10 victories. "But you have to earn the respect of your teammates and coaches. You have to make them believe."

The Longhorns believe in McCoy now.

"It's his team from a quarterback standpoint," Texas coach Mack Brown said. "Last year, he was competing for a job. This year, he is much more confident with our football team."

Fans in other Big 12 outposts — from College Station to Columbia, Lawrence to Lubbock and points in between — are hoping to see similar strides in their quarterbacks this season.

They hope to see inexperience transformed into experience, rookie mistakes transformed into veteran know-how.

And, in the case of Harrell at Texas Tech, jeers transformed into cheers. ■

Planting the Recruiting Seeds Earlier and Earlier

Is 'staying ahead of the game' really for the better?

By Jeff McDonald

The future arrived at the University of Texas one day in the spring, bright-eyed and full of hope. It also came bearing fruit roll-ups and juice pouches in a SpongeBob lunch box.

Near the end of the Longhorns' spring workouts, a gaggle of pre-teens on a field trip from a local junior high swirled through the gates of the school's athletic complex, right past a thoroughly amused coach Mack Brown.

"These are our new recruits," Brown announced with a wink. "We've already got commitments from most of them."

He was joking. But only barely.

Almost from the day he arrived at Texas in December of 1997, Brown has earned a reputation across the state as the king of early recruiting.

He was the guy targeting high school juniors when everybody else was still fooling around with seniors. He was the guy getting commitments from players nearly a full calendar year before they could actually sign a binding letter of intent.

So if Brown really had been entertaining an army of prepubescent recruits barely out of Underoos, well, nobody would have been surprised.

But just to set the record straight: Brown has no plans in near future to begin offering junior high kids. Right now, he won't even offer high school sophomores.

However in today's recruiting game, in which every round is the lightning round, other schools in the state — most notably Texas A&M — have no such qualms about going after sophomores.

It's enough to make the man who practically invented the art of speed recruiting to want to tap the brakes a bit.

"Some of those guys aren't even shaving yet," Brown said, shaking his head.

With the recruiting process seemingly permanently stuck on fast forward, coaching staffs are almost forced to evaluate players who, in some cases, have yet to play a varsity game.

"As a result," Brown said, "I think we'll see some more mistakes being made."

That is the risk in this brave new world of early recruiting in the state of Texas, a monster that Brown helped to create. If it means out-Texasing Texas, most coaches seem happy to live with it.

Pioneered by the likes of Penn State's Joe Paterno and Ohio State's John Cooper, the concept of early recruiting has its roots in the early 1990s. Neither could have quite envisioned the process moving along as rapidly as it does now.

To wit: On Feb. 7, Brown welcomed another star-studded recruiting class to the fold, a 25-member crop ranked among the Top 5 nationally. Most of that class had been in the bag since August.

Three days later, Brown hosted the Longhorns' annual junior day. Before that day ended, he had locked up commitments from nine of the state's most heralded juniors, a mere 362 days before signing day 2008.

Over the next six weeks, he locked up nine more. Not to be outdone, Texas A&M coach Dennis Franchione secured 15 commitments before March 1.

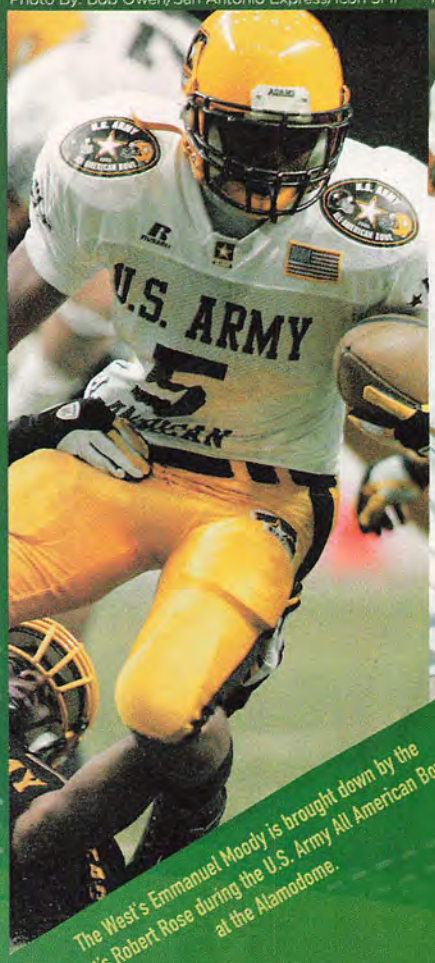
"There's no question if you're going to recruit in this state, you have to start recruiting early," Franchione said. "I think the kids today are more informed than they've ever been, and that makes it easy."

It didn't take Franchione long to learn lesson No. 1 about early recruiting: Nothing is official until you have a prospect's autograph on a binding letter of intent. Before April was out, five of the Aggies' first 15 commitments had "de-committed," with intentions to test the waters at other schools.

The most prized of those losses — blue-chip linebacker Dravannti Johnson — ultimately switched his commitment to (who else?) Texas. That brought Brown's commitment list to 19 before the end of April.

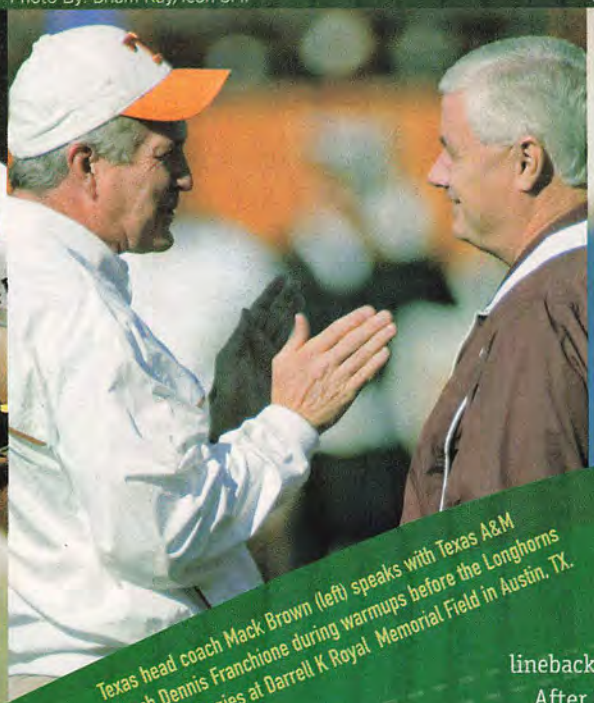
"I can guarantee you those schools with 20 (early) commitments are going to lose five or six of them," said Texas Tech coach Mike Leach, who only dab-

Photo By: Bob Owen/San Antonio Express/Icon SMI



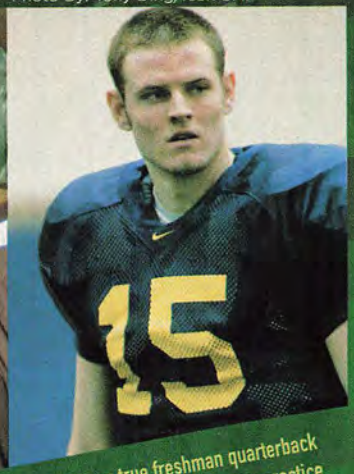
The West's Emmanuel Moody is brought down by the East's Robert Rose during the U.S. Army All American Bowl at the Alamodome.

Photo By: Briam Ray/Icon SMI



Texas head coach Mack Brown (left) speaks with Texas A&M head coach Dennis Franchione during warmups before the Longhorns 12-7 loss to the Aggies at Darrell K Royal Memorial Field in Austin, TX.

Photo By: Tony Ding/Icon SMI



Michigan true freshman quarterback Ryan Mallett during a spring practice session in Ann Arbor, MI.

bles in the art of early recruiting. "After a while, kids get bored, and they miss the attention, so they go looking at the other school down the street."

Not even the state's flagship football school is immune to such defections.

In the past two recruiting seasons, Texas has been burned by late de-commitments from blue-chip quarterback recruits Ryan Perrilloux and John Brantley. Both players decided to spurn a verbal pledge to Texas and to play college ball in their respective home states — Perrilloux at LSU and Brantley at Florida.

Other times, Texas has been burned by its iron-clad policy against allowing recruits to visit other schools.

When hot-shot running back recruit Emmanuel Moody opted to flirt with USC after verbally committing to the Longhorns in 2006, Brown cut Moody loose. The notion is that if a player is intent on continuing his visits to other schools, then he really isn't committed to his "commitment." The running back found a soft landing with the Trojans, for whom he rushed for 459 yards as a true freshman.

This year, the Longhorns also missed out on Ryan Mallett, the state's most prized quarterback recruit, in part because of his hesitancy to commit early. Mallett wound up signing with Michigan.

Brown, in time, has learned to shrug off those kinds of recruiting whiffs.

"There are plenty of players in this state to go around," he said.

At a powerhouse like Texas, that's an easy attitude to take. It's not so easy at a smaller school like Baylor. Just ask Bears coach Guy Morriss. When Brantley reneged at Texas last December, the Longhorns bagged his replacement by poaching Baylor's burgeoning recruiting class.

They landed G.J. Kinne, an in-state recruit who had been committed to Baylor for almost a year. His defection was doubly painful for the Bears — Kinne's father, Gary Joe, is the school's linebackers coach.

After losing Kinne, Morriss went on record for the first time in favor of an early signing period, during which prospects could sign a binding letter of intent even before the start of their senior seasons.

It's a proposal that big-school coaches like Brown and Franchione have long championed, and one that seems to be catching on among Division I-A coaches, although smaller schools fear it would widen the divide between the haves and the have-nots.

"It would make things a lot easier," Franchione said, "especially with kids who know where they want to go."

College football still might be a few years from making an early-signing period a reality.

In the meantime, Brown isn't sure he likes the direction that this whole early recruiting train is headed. He can picture a day when recruits really will show up on an official visit with juice pouches and lunch boxes in tow. And that, he says, is no laughing matter.

"With the early recruiting process you're continuing to look at guys during the year that are sophomores and juniors," Brown said. "If people are going to offer scholarships early, you have to stay ahead of the game." ■

HUSKER NATION READY TO BECOME SAM'S CLUB?

BY STEVE PIVOVAR

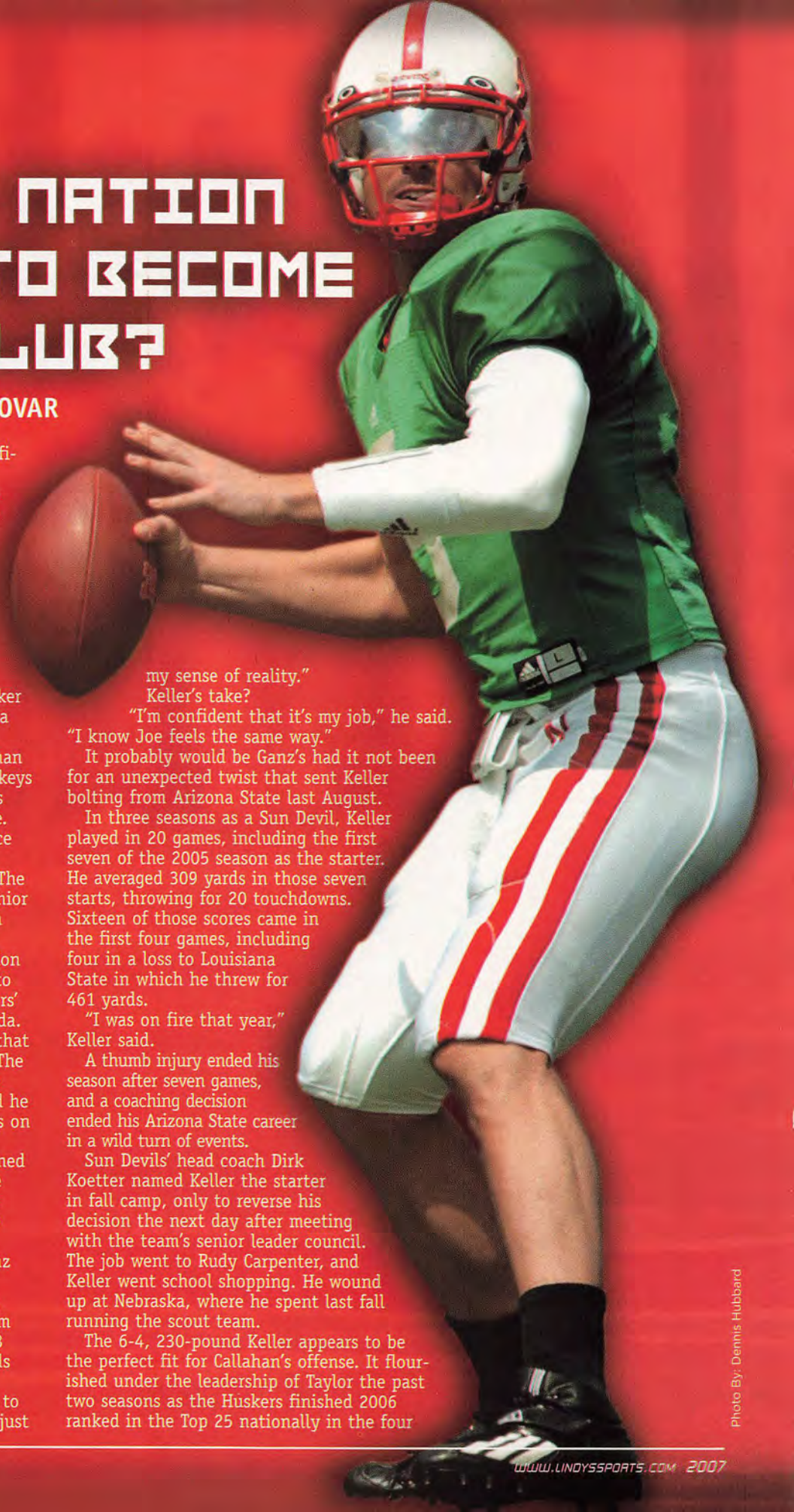


Photo By: Dennis Hubbard

Sam Keller does not lack for confidence.

Following a solid performance in Nebraska's spring game — the one and only chance Husker fans have had a chance to assess whether the quarterback is as good as his hype — Keller was asked to critique his effort.

"I graded out at probably at an A-minus or a B-plus," Keller said. "I feel good."

And if Keller feels good, the Husker Nation does, too. After all, Nebraska fans have been waiting since last August for the day when Bill Callahan hands the strong-armed Keller the keys to the West Coast offense and turns him loose on the Big 12 Conference.

But if Keller is the people's choice to replace All-Big 12 quarterback Zac Taylor, he isn't yet Callahan's. The way Callahan sees it, Keller and junior Joe Ganz came out of the spring in a dead heat for the No. 1 job.

They will continue the competition in preseason camp, with a starter to be named shortly before the Huskers' season-opening game against Nevada.

It might be difficult to imagine that Keller won't win the competition. The Arizona State transfer has just one season of eligibility remaining, and he has the physical tools to put smiles on the faces of pro scouts.

What Ganz has is experience gained from serving as Taylor's backup the past two seasons as well as a quiet confidence that won't allow him to concede the job without a fight.

In the Huskers' spring game, Ganz completed 11 of 18 passes for 157 yards and a touchdown. Keller, who also worked with the first-team offense against the No. 2 and No. 3 defenses, was 10 of 13 for 193 yards and a touchdown.

"I thought it looked pretty even to me," Ganz said. "But maybe that's just my sense of reality."

Keller's take?

"I'm confident that it's my job," he said. "I know Joe feels the same way."

It probably would be Ganz's had it not been for an unexpected twist that sent Keller bolting from Arizona State last August.

In three seasons as a Sun Devil, Keller played in 20 games, including the first seven of the 2005 season as the starter. He averaged 309 yards in those seven starts, throwing for 20 touchdowns. Sixteen of those scores came in the first four games, including four in a loss to Louisiana State in which he threw for 461 yards.

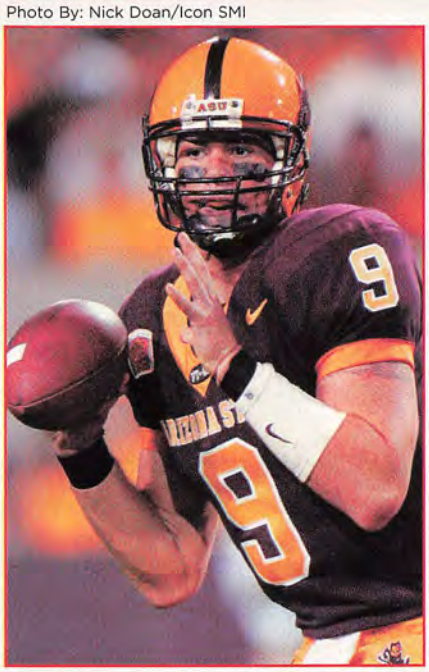
"I was on fire that year," Keller said.

A thumb injury ended his season after seven games, and a coaching decision ended his Arizona State career in a wild turn of events.

Sun Devils' head coach Dirk Koetter named Keller the starter in fall camp, only to reverse his decision the next day after meeting with the team's senior leader council. The job went to Rudy Carpenter, and Keller went school shopping. He wound up at Nebraska, where he spent last fall running the scout team.

The 6-4, 230-pound Keller appears to be the perfect fit for Callahan's offense. It flourished under the leadership of Taylor the past two seasons as the Huskers finished 2006 ranked in the Top 25 nationally in the four

Photo By: Nick Doan/Icon SMI



Sam Keller threw 23 touchdown passes in eight starts for the Arizona State Sun Devils in 2005 before transferring to Nebraska after he was passed over for the starting job.

KELLER AS A SUN DEVIL

Sam Keller played in 20 games at Arizona State, but only eight as a starter. Still, that was enough time for him to put up big numbers — the kind of numbers that have Nebraska fans eager to see what he can do in the Big 12.

Here are the game-by-game stats from Keller's eight starts:

YEAR	OPPONENT	C-A-YDS	TD	INT
2004	Purdue	25-45-370	3	0
2005	Temple	14-24-208	4	2
2005	LSU	35-56-461	4	0
2005	Northwestern	20-31-409	4	0
2005	Oregon State	19-36-365	4	0
2005	USC	26-45-347	2	5
2005	Oregon	31-56-277	2	2
2005	Stanford	19-25-98	0	0
Career	20-game totals	220-378-3,018	26	11

major offensive statistical categories.

Whether Keller can take it to another level remains to be seen. After what he went through at Arizona State, Keller is not about to take anything for granted.

"I've got some things I need to do on the practice field before fans throw me in there as the anointed one," Keller said.

"It takes a lot of hard work in this offense. My best weapon will be this offense. The best I can do is hone in on this offense, and know exactly what I'm doing every single play — then I think some big things can happen."

Ganz, too, believes he is capable of making things happen if he can get the chance.

"I'm sure a lot of people thought that when Sam came here that I would transfer or just be content to be the backup," Ganz said.

"But that's not my nature. I wanted to go out and show the fans that I can do this and that I'm capable of doing it. Hopefully, they'll walk away saying we have a competition instead of just giving it to Sam, like they have been."

Callahan gave little indication which way he was leaning after spring drills. He talked about how the other quarterbacks — Beau Davis and incoming freshman Patrick Witt — performed well enough to create some excitement heading into the fall. And the Husker staff wants to get a look at Zac Lee, a junior college transfer who missed spring drills with a knee injury.

"He's a real talent," Callahan said. "I'm going to wait and be patient to see how it all shakes out."

What probably will not transpire is Nebraska experimenting with some form of quarterback rotation.

"I've seen a lot of people do it and do it effectively," Callahan said. "I've just always been a one-quarterback guy."

Callahan's system puts such an emphasis on the quarterback that he likes to get his No. 1 about 85 to 90 percent of the practice snaps. Given that, one might think Callahan would want to make a decision and start the grooming process as quickly as possible.

Not so, he said.

"It's a positive that players continue to compete on a consistent basis," he said. "I think it provides for a great atmosphere. I wish I had a crystal ball, but you can't make determinations too soon." ■

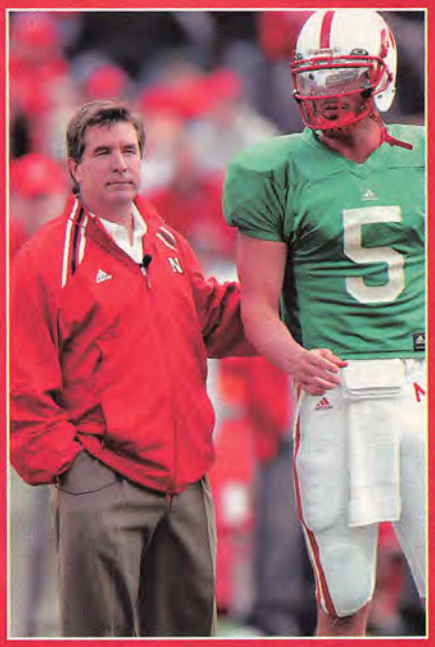


Photo By: Dennis Hubbard

Nebraska coach Bill Callahan is not handing the No. 1 quarterback job to Sam Keller (5) just yet, but the Arizona State transfer is expected to take the season's first snap.

AT A GLANCE

2006

4-8 overall, 3-5 Big 12 (6th, South)

COACH

Guy Morriss — At Baylor: 15-31, 4 years; overall: 24-45, 6 years

RETURNING STARTERS

11; 4 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH

RB Brandon Whitaker, WR Ernest Smith, OT Jason Smith, DT Vincent Rhodes, LB Joe Pawelek, LB Nick Moore, ROV Dwain Crawford

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

With both linebackers and three of the four linemen returning, the Bears should be strong up front on defense. On offense, the line has a chance to be much better than the 2006 version that allowed 36 sacks.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

With the top three cornerbacks gone and senior Braelon Davis trying to regain his academic eligibility, that position is a dicey situation. Projected starting quarterback Michael Machen has upside, but is untested at the Big 12 level.

KEY LOSSES

QB Shawn Bell, WR Dominique Zeigler, WR Trent Shelton, P Daniel Sepulveda, CB Anthony Arline, CB C.J. Wilson

OVERVIEW

It should help that the Bears are in their second year in the spread offense, but they have little experience at the skill positions, including a new starting quarterback. There are also holes to fill on defense, so this doesn't look like the season in which Baylor ends its 13-year bowl drought.

Morriss Continues to Search for Right Combinations

Guy Morriss isn't ready to start over from scratch.

But after four consecutive losing seasons, and a particularly frustrating ending last year, the Baylor head coach was certainly open to changes.

When the offseason dust settled, Morriss had five new assistant coaches, including his third defensive coordinator in five years, and an offense committed to being more physical.

More than anything, Morriss wants the Bears to avoid a repeat of last year's slide, when they lost their last three games by an average of 31 points after losing starting quarterback Shawn Bell.

"We had a young quarterback come in, and the people around him didn't do enough to help him and take some of the pressure off him," Morriss said.

"And it's not just an offensive problem. The special teams were pitiful down the stretch, the defense didn't play well enough, and we didn't coach good enough."

Morriss made changes, firing special teams coordinator Chris Lancaster and receivers coach Harold Jackson, a longtime friend. He lost two other assistants to the NFL, including defensive coordinator Bill Bradley. Recruiting coordinator Wes McGriff went to Miami after a short pit stop at Kansas State.

Second-year offensive coordinator Lee Hays takes over the quarterback-coaching duties because Wes Phillips left to join his dad, Wade, with the Dallas Cowboys.

With Bell gone, Hays has a wide-open field of candidates that includes transfers Michael Machen and John David Weed, sophomore Blake Szymanski and redshirt freshman Tyler Beatty.

"The good thing about it is I've got a bunch, and they're all pretty solid," Hays said.

"The sad part is it's a rep-based system, and I can only go with so many. If a kid won't work for me, I've got no problem. But they all work pretty hard. They all deserve a shot. I wouldn't be surprised if there's not a starter named until the end of two-a-days."

Hays' main objective is making the spread-formation offense he brought with him from Division II West Texas A&M more physical.

"People talk about the spread being finesse," Hays said. "No offense is finesse unless your players believe it's finesse. If that ball is handed off, those receivers need to be smacking somebody down the field and abusing that guy.

"And if you get smashed, get up and come back again. But don't stand around or look like a 90-year-old lady getting beat."

OFFENSE

Whatever happens at quarterback, the Bears have to make improvements to a line that allowed 36 sacks last season.

Arizona State transfer J.D. Walton takes over at center and joins returning starters Jason Smith, Dan Gay and Chad Smith. If sophomore Thad Boatner steps up at right tackle, the line should be significantly better.

Jason Smith Photo by John Rivera/Icon SMI

PHOTO BY DOUG HOLLEMON

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 40.2 ypg rushing (12th in Big 12/119th in NCAA), 275.0 ypg passing (3rd/11th), 315.2 ypg total offense (11th/86th), 23.6 ppg (9th/59th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Michael Machen	Sr.	Kent State transfer threw for 2,000 yards in 2005.	J.D. Weed, Jr./B. Szymanski, So.
RB	Brandon Whitaker	Sr.	Has 60 catches over last 2 years.	Jay Finley, Fr.
WR	Thomas White*	Jr.	Former walk-on has speed to burn.	David Gettis, So.
WR	Ernest Smith	So.	Played as true frosh; ready for a breakthrough.	Mikail Baker, Jr.
IR	Justin Akers	So.	A former tight end with good hands.	Jordan Adams, Sr.
IR	Justin Fenty	So.	Had 19 catches as a true freshman.	C. Sims, Jr./B. Taylor, Fr.
LT	Jason Smith*	Jr.	Converted tight end moves from right side.	Chris Griesenbeck, So.
LG	Dan Gay*	Jr.	Former defensive lineman has found a home.	Sam Sledge, So.
C	J.D. Walton	So.	Arizona State transfer hasn't played since '04.	Mike Miller, Sr.
RG	Chad Smith*	Sr.	Was limited by back spasms last year.	James Barnard, So.
RT	Thad Boatner	So.	Older brother Yancy played on offensive line for Baylor.	Jordan Hearvey, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 191.1 ypg rushing (12th in Big 12/113th in NCAA); 217.1 ypg passing (7th/83rd); 408.2 ypg total defense (12th/110th); 32.6 ppg (12th/110th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Jason Lamb*	So.	Had 5.5 tackles for loss as a redshirt freshman.	Leon Freeman, Jr.
DT	Vincent Rhodes*	Jr.	He is the Bears' best defensive tackle in years.	Damien Taylor, So.
NT	Trey Bryant	So.	Played just 56 snaps last year.	Connor Redfearn, Sr.
DE	Geoff Nelson*	Sr.	Led the team with just 2.5 sacks.	Jameon Hardeman, Fr.
LB	Joe Pawelek*	So.	Freshman All-American had team-high 86 tackles.	Ben Hixson, Jr.
LB	Nick Moore*	Sr.	Can play either of the linebacker spots.	Antonio Jones, So.
OS	Jeremy Williams	So.	Saw limited action last season as backup.	Brandon Stiggers, Sr.*
ROV	Dwain Crawford*	Jr.	Switched from free safety.	Jake LaMar, Jr.
CB	Braelon Davis	Sr.	Trying to regain academic eligibility.	Josh Bell, Sr.
CB	Alton Widemon	Sr.	Started as true freshman at Tulane.	Dominique Criss, Fr.
FS	Jordan Lake	So.	Missed last seven games with broken collarbone.	Marlon Price, Jr.

*Returning starter

"Last year we were just trying to get out of the huddle and get to the line of scrimmage," Morriss said. "Now, they've got a good grasp for it and how important the little things are."

A better line could also be the key to an improved running game. The Bears ranked last among 119 Division I-A teams last year, averaging 40.2 yards rushing per game and 2.1 per attempt.

The negative yardage from the sacks didn't help, but the Bears have to get better production from running backs Brandon Whitaker and Jay Finley.

Whitaker's numbers fell off drastically, a year after he rushed for nearly 500 yards and a 4.8-yard average as a sophomore. To keep the starting job, Whitaker will have to develop more of a north-and-south style of running.

"I think in Brandon's mind, he needs to take it 60 or 70 yards every play," Morriss said. "And that's not going to happen. Sometimes, you've just got to put your head down and get what you can get."

Dominique Zeigler and Trent Shelton, two of the program's top five receivers of all-time, have passed the baton to a corps of younger receivers that includes Ernest Smith, Thomas White, David Gettis, Mikail Baker and Queito Teasley.

The inside spots also are well stocked with Carl Sims, Justin Fenty, Brad Taylor and Justin Akers. But instead of relying on a go-to receiver, the Bears will go with more of a committee approach.

While the first-team line is solid, depth is definitely a problem. But there's help on the way with incoming freshmen Courtney Green, Anthony Morgan and John Jones.

DEFENSE

Like the offense, the defense's biggest improvement likely will come on the line.

Ends Geoff Nelson and Jason Lamb and tackle Vincent Rhodes return as starters, and they will be joined by sophomore nose tackle Trey Bryant. New defensive coordinator Larry Hoefer's aggressive style showed in the spring game, when the first-team line racked up six sacks.

"We're not going to just sit back and play base defense," said Hoefer, who will just subtly tweak the 4-2-5 scheme.

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Earl Patin, LB

One of the bigger surprises in the 2007 recruiting class, Patin was one of the last commitments for the Bears — and potentially could be the biggest. Patin, from Baton Rouge (La.) Southern Lab, has the MIKE linebacker skills to compete for early playing time in Waco.

Shea Brewster, K

The nation's No. 11 ranked kicker, Brewster's strong leg and experience at A&M Consolidated High School makes him an interesting player to watch. If he competes well, he could figure into the mix early for the Bears in the special teams area. He was a third-team All-State selection as a senior.

Chris Francis, LB

Francis' father, James, starred for Baylor and in the NFL. Chris looks to make a big impact early in Waco. Though slightly undersized, he led a strong high school defense to a state championship. His hard-hitting, aggressive nature could earn him early playing time.

THE SLEEPER

V.J. McElroy, DB

Safety V.J. McElroy has the bloodline to be a top college safety. His father, Vann McElroy, was a former standout at that position for Baylor. A solid athlete with return ability, V.J. McElroy could play earlier than his two-star ranking indicates. His high school play shows why they Bears may have found a gem in South Texas.

Committments	27
Average Stars	2.56
✪✪✪✪✪	0
✪✪✪✪✪	1
✪✪✪✪✪	13
✪✪✪✪✪	13
Total Stars	69
National Rank: 63	Big 12: 12

2008 NEEDS

The Bears will load up on offensive and defensive linemen — as they've done in the two previous classes. Considering Baylor didn't take a running back in the 2007 class, look for them to target that position in the 2008 group. A quarterback also would relieve some pressure after hitting the junior college ranks in 2007.

— John Talman, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
BARNARD, James	OL	6-4, 285	✪✪	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville CC
Enrolled in January. ... Could play either guard or tackle. ... Redshirted as a freshman at Coffeyville. ... Played in high school at Overland Park (Kan.) Shawnee Mission South.					
BLAYLOCK, Romie	WR	5-9, 163	✪✪✪	Cedar Hill, TX	Cedar Hill
Caught 32 passes for 590 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior. ... Second-team All-District. ... Helped team to Class 5A Division II state title.					
BREWSTER, Shea	K	5-11, 160	✪✪✪	College Station, TX	Consolidated
Rivals.com's No. 11 kicker nationally. ... Class 5A third-team All-State. ... Four field goals of 40 yards or longer. ... Two game-winning field goals.					
BUERCK, Krys	WR	5-10, 167	✪✪✪	Mesquite, TX	Mesquite
Caught 48 passes for 970 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior. ... District co-Offensive MVP. ... Honorable mention All-State.					
COFFEY, Elliot	DB	6-0, 182	✪✪	Sugar Land, TX	Clements
Son of former NFL safety Ken Coffey. ... Two-time All-District. ... Had 59 tackles and three interceptions as a senior. ... District utility MVP.					
DOUGLASS, Ryan	DE	6-2, 210	✪✪✪	Leander, TX	Leander
Rivals.com's No. 96 prospect in Texas. ... No. 28 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Had 70 tackles and six sacks as a senior.					
EPPERSON, Derek	K	6-3, 220	✪✪	Keller, TX	Keller
Averaged 42 yards per punt. ... First-team All-District. ... Landed eight punts inside the 20.					
FRANCIS, Chris	LB	5-10, 213	✪✪✪	Cedar Hill, TX	Cedar Hill
Rivals.com's No. 62 outside linebacker nationally. ... Son of Baylor All-American James Francis. ... Class 5A state Defensive Player of the Year.					
FREEMAN, Leon	LB	6-2, 235	✪✪✪	Mesa, AZ	Mesa CC
Rivals.com's No. 75 junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... Had 49 tackles and 13 tackles for a loss as a sophomore at Mesa.					
GREEN, Courtney	OL	6-4, 285	✪✪✪	Corsicana, TX	Corsicana
Rivals.com's No. 69 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 33 offensive guard nationally. ...Class 4A second-team all-state.					
HIGHTOWER, Hunter	OL	6-5, 280	✪✪	Richardson, TX	Pearce
Honorable mention Class 4A All-State. ... First-team All-District.					
JOHNSON, Antonio	LB	6-1, 200	✪✪	Waco, TX	Waco
Honorable mention Class 4A All-State. ... Had 72 tackles, 25 tackles for a loss and 16.5 sacks as a senior. ... Could play linebacker or safety.					
JONES, John	OL	6-4, 310	✪✪✪	Cedar Hill, TX	Cedar Hill
Rivals.com's No. 89 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 56 offensive guard nationally. ... Led team to Class 5A Division II state title.					
McDOUGALD, Rex	DT	6-2, 302	✪✪✪	Iola, TX	Iola
First team Class A All-State. ... School's career-leading tackler with 540. ... Also rushed for more than 4,000 career yards.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
McELROY, V.J.	DB	6-1, 180	✪✪	Uvalde, TX	Uvalde
Son of Baylor All-American safety Vann McElroy. ... Class 4A second-team All-State. ... District MVP.					
MORGAN, Anthony	OL	6-3, 335	✪✪✪	Lancaster, TX	Lancaster
Rivals.com's No. 58 offensive guard nationally. ... Class 4A second-team All-State.					
NEWTON, Eddy	WR	6-2, 205	✪✪	Los Angeles, CA	West L. A. CC
Caught 36 passes for 779 yards and seven touchdowns in seven games. ... Had four interceptions as a senior at Venice (Texas).					
ODOM Jr., Clifton	DB	5-11, 175	✪✪	Arlington, TX	Martin
First-team All-District. ... Had 21 tackles and two touchdowns as a senior. ... Standout kickoff returner.					
PATIN, Earl	LB	6-1, 228	✪✪✪✪	Baton Rouge, LA	Southern Lab
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 6 inside linebacker nationally. ... No. 13 prospect in Louisiana. ... First-team All-State. ... Had 144 tackles and five sacks as a senior.					
ROSEBUD, Larry	DB	5-10, 170	✪✪✪	Mesquite, TX	North Mesquite
Rivals.com's No 52 cornerback nationally. ... Class 5A honorable mention All-State. ... Has 13 career interceptions. ... Second-team All-District as a junior.					
SCOTTON, Zac	DT	6-6, 250	✪✪	Cypress, TX	Creek
Second-team All-District. ... Had 55 tackles, 11 tackles for a loss, five sacks and a punt block as a senior. ... Began career at quarterback.					
SIMS, Ray	LB	6-0, 210	✪✪✪	Corsicana, TX	Navarro CC
Could play safety. ... Had 72 tackles as a sophomore at Navarro. ... Honorable mention All-Conference. ... Played in high school at Corsicana High.					
SINGLETARY, Matt	DE	6-3, 205	✪✪	San Jose, CA	Valley Christian
Son of Hall of Fame linebacker Mike Singletary. ... Had 64 tackles and four sacks as a senior.					
TUCK, Chris	WR	6-5, 197	✪✪	Mineola, TX	Mineola
First-team All-District as a junior. ... Caught 27 passes for 357 yards and six touchdowns as a junior.					
VACLIN, Barry	DB	5-11, 177	✪✪	Port Arthur, TX	Memorial
Class 5A honorable mention All-State. ... First-team All-State. ... Had four interceptions as a senior. ... Also a standout kickoff returner.					
WEED, John David	QB	6-5, 223	✪✪✪	Tyler, TX	Tyler JC
Southwest Junior College Football Conference Offensive Player of the Year ... Passed for 2,104 yards and 19 touchdowns as a sophomore at Tyler.					
WILLIAMS, Stacy	ATH	5-11, 169	✪✪	Houston, TX	Yates
District Offensive MVP. ... Played quarterback, running back and wide receiver. ... Rushed for 879 yards with eight touchdowns.					

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
80	JORDAN ADAMS	IR	6-4	247	Sr	Arlington
82	JUSTIN AKERS	IR	6-5	237	So	Deer Park
20	CALEB ALLEN	P/PK	6-0	169	Jr	Arlington
28	TONY ANDERSON	RB	6-2	232	So	Arlington
30	TIM ATCHISON	FS	6-2	203	Fr	Copperas Cove
3	MIKAIL BAKER	WR	6-0	186	Jr	Dallas
61	JAMES BARNARD	OG	6-4	291	So	Overland Park, KS
12	TYLER BEATTY	QB	6-3	200	Fr	Pflugerville
2	JOSH BELL	CB	6-0	168	Sr	Dallas
19	JOE BENNETT	IR	5-7	167	Jr	Arlington
74	THAD BOATNER	OT	6-7	289	So	Hamilton
26	ANTAREIS BRYAN	CB	6-1	186	Fr	Dallas
97	TREY BRYANT	NT	6-3	310	So	Dallas
94	CHRIS BUFORD	NT	6-4	264	Fr	Arlington
56	COOPER CALHOUN	LB	6-2	249	So	Garland
88	RYAN CAMPBELL	WR	6-3	187	So	Fort Worth
58	CHRIS CAREY	DE	6-3	245	So	New Braunfels
1	DWAIN CRAWFORD	ROV	6-0	208	Jr	Giddings
27	DOMINIQUE CRISS	CB	5-9	189	Fr	Arlington
85	JUSTIN FENTY	IR	5-10	174	So	Denton
52	TY FINDLEY	LB	6-0	210	Jr	Marshall
32	JAY FINLEY	RB	5-11	195	Fr	Corsicana
49	LEON FREEMAN	DE	6-2	235	Jr	Vero Beach, FL
71	DAN GAY	OG	6-5	311	Jr	Lafayette, LA
51	ADAM GEIB	DE	6-5	250	Jr	Waco
4	DAVID GETTIS	WR	6-4	206	So	Los Angeles, CA
78	CHRIS GRIESENBECK	OT	6-3	267	So	San Antonio
23	TRENT GUNNELS	RB	5-11	189	Fr	Fairfield
79	DYLAN HAGENS	OT	6-7	277	Fr	Shiner
10	JAMEON HARDEMAN	DE	6-1	262	Fr	Dallas
69	RICKY HASOON	OG	6-2	289	Sr	Katy
75	JORDAN HEARVEY	OT	6-4	305	So	Richardson
34	BEN HIXSON	LB	6-2	225	Jr	Southlake
32	DESMOND JENKINS	OS	5-10	198	Jr	Trinidad
8	ANTONIO JONES	LB	6-3	226	So	Dallas
25	JACOBY JONES	RB	5-11	219	Jr	Bangs
42	ZACH JONES	OS	5-11	195	Sr	Pflugerville
59	RANDY KING	DT	6-3	242	Fr	Alice
47	TYLER KING	LB	6-3	205	So	Atlanta, GA
17	ALEX KUSHNEIR	S	6-1	195	Fr	Basking Ridge, NJ
21	JORDAN LAKE	FS	6-2	209	So	Houston
12	JAKE LAMAR	ROV	6-0	188	Jr	Bedford
5	LUKE LAMAR	QB	6-2	192	Fr	Bedford
88	JASON LAMB	DE	6-6	253	So	Richardson
48	DANIEL LOPEZ	LB	5-11	230	Sr	Brownsville
46	CHAD LOWE	LB	6-1	223	Fr	Los Angeles, CA
7	MICHAEL MACHEN	QB	6-6	240	Sr	Mobile, AL
99	REX MCDOUGALD	DT	6-2	302	Fr	Iola
64	JEREMY MICHEL	OG	6-5	292	Fr	Bradenton, FL
53	MIKE MILLER	C	6-3	273	Sr	Lake Charles, LA
44	NICK MOORE	LB	6-1	226	Sr	Arlington
57	GEOFF NELSON	DE	6-2	260	Sr	Cedar Hill
41	JOE PAWELEK	LB	6-2	231	So	Spring Branch
35	ANDRE PIERCE	RB	5-10	180	Fr	Mesquite
11	MARLON PRICE	FS	6-2	193	Jr	Dallas
77	REID PRINCE	C	6-4	274	Fr	Frisco
87	BEN RANDLE	IR	6-5	206	Fr	Plano
92	CONNOR REDFEARN	NT	6-2	287	Sr	Mt. Pleasant
91	VINCENT RHODES	DT	6-2	302	Jr	Denison
8	RYAN ROBERTS	QB	6-0	212	Jr	Keller
7	RALPH RODRIGUEZ	CB	5-10	181	Sr	Fort Stockton
19	KEVIN SCHUPP	S	6-1	180	Fr	Prosper
50	SAM SHALALA	LB	6-1	223	Jr	Sugar Land
24	CARL SIMS	IR	5-10	182	Jr	Waco
60	SAM SLEDGE	OG	6-2	270	So	Midland
70	CHAD SMITH	OG	6-6	280	Sr	Allen
13	ERNEST SMITH	WR	6-3	186	So	New Orleans, LA
72	JASON SMITH	OT	6-5	288	Jr	Dallas
9	BRANDON STIGGERS	ROV	6-0	199	Sr	Houston
84	PATRICK SWINDLE	WR	5-11	180	Fr	Tyler
6	BLAKE SZYMANSKI	QB	6-4	209	So	Wichita Falls
73	TED TANNER	OT	6-3	291	Sr	Waco
18	BRAD TAYLOR	IR	6-3	232	Fr	Madisonville
95	DAMIEN TAYLOR	DT	6-3	271	So	Waco
10	QUEITO TEASLEY	WR	6-1	187	Jr	Katy
40	KEEGAN VANN	FB	6-0	255	Sr	Katy
93	RAYLON WALTERS	DE	6-5	228	So	Houston
55	J.D.WALTON	C	6-2	322	So	Allen
17	JOHN DAVID WEED	QB	6-4	214	Jr	Houston
62	JONATHAN WEEKS	DS	5-10	258	Sr	Glendale, AZ
2	BRANDON WHITAKER	RB	5-10	197	Sr	Edmond, OK
21	THOMAS WHITE	WR	6-2	206	Jr	Plano
20	ALTON WIDEMON	CB	5-11	178	Sr	Lindale
4	JEREMY WILLIAMS	OS	5-10	204	So	Dallas

NOTEBOOK

Matt Singletary, **V.J. McElroy** and **Chris Francis** didn't even have to bring their dads on their recruiting trips to Baylor. They could just look up on the facing of Floyd Casey Stadium and see their fathers' rather large images.

All-Americans Mike Singletary, Van McElroy and James Francis were part of a heritage project that honored 26 former players or coaches with life-size banners.

This year's roster also includes the sons of former Baylor football players Alfred Anderson (running back **Tony Anderson**), Ervin Randle (receiver **Ben Randle**) and David Sledge (offensive guard **Sam Sledge**) and basketball letterman George Lake (free safety **Jordan Lake**).

• While Kent State transfer and former minor league pitcher **Michael Machen** will turn 26 in October, he's not the only "old man" on the team.

Defensive end **Leon Freeman**, a junior transfer from Mesa (Ariz.) Community College, will celebrate his 25th birthday on Oct. 31. A native of Vero Beach, Fla., Freeman joined the U.S. Army straight out of high school and served three months in Iraq with Bravo Company 141.

With his three-year stint over, Freeman received an honorable discharge in 2005 as a specialist.

• When linebackers coach **Gary Joe Kinne** went to the East meets West Challenge in January at Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex in Orlando, Fla., it wasn't intended to be a recruiting trip.

He was there to watch his son, quarterback G.J. Kinne, play in the elite all-star game just two weeks after switching his commitment from Baylor to Texas. But linebacker **Earl Patin** from Baton Rouge, La., stuck out like a sore thumb.

"He was the best defensive player there," the elder Kinne said. "I thought it was maybe a shot in the dark. But at the time, to be honest, I truly was being a dad. I was just talking to his mom and dad and getting to know them, and I kind of built a relationship with them."

Rated a four-star recruit and the 13th-best player in Louisiana by Rivals, Patin had offers from Nebraska, Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Mississippi and West Virginia.

But in a somewhat surprise, the two-time All-State linebacker picked the Bears for the chance to play early.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
S. Bell	9	130.70	241	383	10	62.9	2582	19	79	286.9
B. Szymanski	5	100.06	64	121	7	52.9	689	4	56	137.8

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
P. Mosley	11	100	499	20	479	4.8	6	56	43.5
B. Whitake	9	41	188	30	158	3.9	1	42	17.6
B. Szymanski	5	44	162	144	18	0.4	2	21	3.6

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
D. Zeigler	11	54	741	13.7	3	79	67.4
T. Shelton	12	53	802	15.1	8	75	66.8
B. Whitaker	9	30	192	6.4	1	16	21.3

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Pawelek 86, N. Moore 75, M. Linguist 71.
Interceptions: C.J. Wilson 4, D. Crawford 3, J. Todd 3, A. Arline 2
Sacks: G. Nelson 2.5, J. Pawelek 2, V. Rhodes 2
Tackles for loss: M. Linguist 7.5, J. Lamb 5.5, J. Pawelek 4.5

Results

(4-8, 3-5)

L	TCU	7-17
W	NORTHWESTERN STATE	47-10
L	at Washington State	15-17
L	ARMY	OT 20-27
W	KANSAS STATE	17-3
W	at Colorado	3OT 34-31
L	at Texas	31-63
W	KANSAS	36-35
L	TEXAS A&M	21-31
L	at Texas Tech	21-55
L	at Oklahoma State	24-66
L	OKLAHOMA	10-36

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

After losing four seniors, it might be tough to rotate at the tackles. But there's depth at the ends with redshirt freshman Jameon Hardeman, junior Adam Geib and 24-year-old junior college transfer Leon Freeman, who spent three years in the Army.

Both starting linebackers return. Joe Pawelek didn't even open the season as a starter, but he finished with a team-high 86 tackles, nine quarterback hurries and was a Freshman All-American.

At the other spot, Nick Moore was second on the team with 75 tackles and added four stops behind the line, three pressures and two forced fumbles.

There's also some blossoming depth with junior Ben Hixson, sophomore Antonio Jones and freshmen Earl Patin and Chris Francis. Patin is a four-star recruit from Baton Rouge, La., who could play early.

Hoefer's biggest concern is finding replacements for starting cornerbacks Anthony Arline and C.J. Wilson. The starters coming out of spring were seniors Josh Bell and Alton Widemon, but Braelon Davis likely will crack the lineup if he regains his academic eligibility this summer.

Even redshirt freshmen Dominique Criss and Antareis Bryan (sidelined by a knee injury this spring) will get a shot in the fall.

"It's a shame that we didn't have Antareis Bryan much this spring," Hoefer said. "He's got physical skills."

The safeties have played musical chairs. Starting free safety Dwain Crawford rotated to rover, with Brandon Stiggers moving to outside safety, and sophomore Jordan Lake taking over at free safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

One of the more troubling areas on the team, the Bears have to replace two-time Ray Guy Award winner Daniel Sepulveda at punter and two-year starter Ryan Havens at kicker.

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

LB Joe Pawelek

The lightly regarded 2005 recruit emerged as the Bears' best defensive player as a redshirt freshman. ... His highlight game was a triple-overtime victory at Colorado, when Pawelek had a career-high 14 tackles and a game-clinching interception in the end zone. ... The league's consensus Freshman Defensive Player of the Year, he had a team-high 86 tackles with two sacks, four pass breakups and 4.5 stops behind the line.

EMERGING STAR

FS Jordan Lake

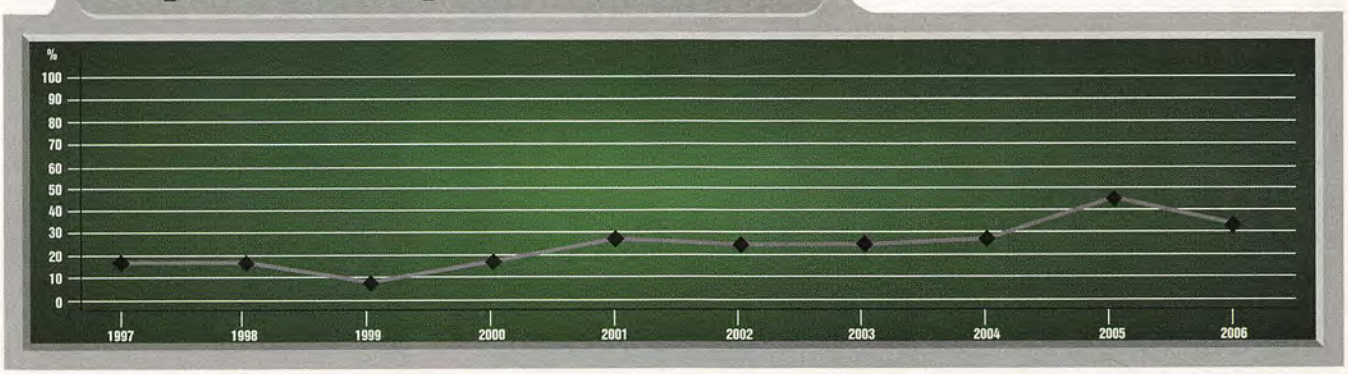
He was just coming into his own as a redshirt freshman when he suffered a broken collarbone in the Big 12-opening win over Kansas State. Lake had five tackles and a fourth-quarter interception to secure the Bears' victory. ... Had two forced fumbles in five games. ... Coaches have so much confidence in him, they moved returning starting free safety Dwain Crawford to rover in the spring.

TOP NEWCOMER

C J.D. Walton

Although he's never played center, the transfer from Arizona State solidified the position in the spring when he earned the respect of the other starters. ... Last "real" game action came in 2004, although he did play on the summer all-star circuit in 2005 after a career at Allen (Texas) High School that included the 5A state semifinals in '03. ... If needed, can also play either guard position.

Baylors' Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PHOTO

Traveling Man at End of the Road

Michael Machen, sometimes known as "Gramps" or "Old Man, is a 25-year-old quarterback who took many winding roads to end up at Baylor.

He's thrilled with this destination. The 6-6, 240-pound transfer from Kent State came out of the spring as the No. 1 quarterback.

"There's not a lot of people that could just pick up shop and move like I have," Machen said.

"I'm not going to give up after all I've gone through. It's been a long road, but this has been my best opportunity of any of the places I've been. It's not really revenge. I just want to prove to people that have doubted me that I'm worthy of being here."

The road began in Mobile, Ala., where Machen threw for 3,000 yards and 25 touchdowns in his senior year at McGill-Toolen High School.

His first detour was to Kissimmee, Fla., and Bluefield, W.Va., and wherever else the bus stopped when he was a minor league pitcher in the Atlanta Braves and Baltimore Orioles organizations.

In three years, the 14th-round draft pick was 8-3 with a 5.02 ERA and 80 strikeouts in 86.1 innings.

"I got a really good offer for where I was drafted," Machen said. "When you're 18 years old, it's kind of hard to turn that down."

When Machen left pro baseball, he seemed to be stepping into the perfect situation at the University of Alabama. But that was before Dennis Franchione left for Texas A&M and Mike Price was fired.

Although he traveled with the team as a true freshman in 2003, then-head coach Mike Shula made it clear the Crimson Tide was going in another direction. So Machen packed his bags for Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College.

When Nebraska went with Zac Taylor, Machen headed for Kent State. As a sophomore starter in 2005, Machen threw for 2,078 yards and 11 touchdowns for a 1-10 team. When he broke his collarbone in preseason drills the next year, coaches "took the offense in another direction."

That's when the road took him to Waco, Texas, where Machen elevated above a crowded quarterback situation this spring. Offensive coordinator Lee Hays raves about Machen's arm.

"I wish I had longer (than one year)," Machen said. "This is a great offense, especially for the numbers you can put up. Obviously the Big 12 is rough. But if you can do it in this conference, you can do it anywhere."

Machen should know. He's already been everywhere.

Junior walk-on Caleb Allen won the punting and kicking jobs almost by default in the spring. But the Bears will add freshman kickers Derek Epperson and Shea Brewster this summer and were still looking for a junior college transfer with proven experience.

Of Baylor's 17 fumbles last season, eight of them came on kick returns. That number has to be reduced if not eliminated.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Eight bowl teams dot the schedule, including former Southwest Conference rivals TCU and Rice in the first two games. But the Owls have to come to Waco under new coach David Bailiff.

After a three-game sweep of the Big 12 North last season, the Bears have to make road trips to Kansas and Kansas State this year. They've won a road game each of the last two seasons, following a nine-year run of futility in Big 12 games on the road.

Since it's almost a mirror copy of last year's closing schedule, that ending stretch of games against Texas Tech, Oklahoma and Oklahoma State can't look all that inviting.

— Jerry Hill

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at TCU
Sept. 8	RICE
Sept. 15	TEXAS STATE
Sept. 22	at Buffalo
Sept. 29	at Texas A&M
Oct. 6	COLORADO
Oct. 13	at Kansas
Oct. 20	TEXAS
Oct. 27	at Kansas State
Nov. 3	TEXAS TECH
Nov. 10	at Oklahoma
Nov. 17	OKLAHOMA STATE

MEAN GREEN

AT A GLANCE

2006

3-9 overall, 2-5 Sun Belt (6th)

COACH

Todd Dodge — At North Texas and overall: 1st year

RETURNING STARTERS

15; 5 offense, 9 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Daniel Meager, RB Jamario Thomas, WR Brandon Jackson, LB Colt Mahan, DL Jeremiah Chapman, LB Maurice Holman, LB Derek Mendoza, DB Aaron Weathers

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The Mean Green returns nine starters on defense and should be much improved on that side of the ball. Jamario Thomas is an explosive running back who has struggled in the past two years, but seems poised for an outstanding senior year.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The Mean Green lost three starters from an offensive line that didn't perform that well a year ago. There are questions in the secondary. Road games are at Oklahoma, Arkansas and SMU.

KEY LOSSES

WR Johnny Quinn, OL Dylan Lineberry

OVERVIEW

The Mean Green might not return to the upper echelon of the Sun Belt, but the offense will be fun to watch. Dodge's wide-open offense will present problems for opponents if he can get consistent quarterback play. If the Mean Green's defense can take advantage of its experience, this could be a surprise team.

Get Ready for Something Completely Different on Offense

OFFENSE

The Mean Green will have a new look in 2007. First-year head coach Todd Dodge, a Texas high school coaching legend, was hired to replace Darrell Dickey, whose offensive approach was centered on the run and play-action passing.

Dodge ... not so much.

The Mean Green will employ as many as five receivers per down in a passing offense that might be especially tricky for the rest of the league to defend.

The key will be at quarterback where junior Daniel Meager, junior Matt Phillips and senior Woody Wilson all saw time last season, none of it terribly productive.

Meager came out of spring as the leading candidate to start — he completed eight of 16 passes for 233 yards and three touchdowns in the spring game — though freshman Giovanni Vizza could win the job. His high school stats were impressive and he fits Dodge's style.

In any case, North Texas' streak of 31 consecutive regular-season games without a 200-yard passer isn't going to survive far into this season.

Senior receiver Brandon Jackson should flourish, and incoming freshmen Breece Johnson and Sam Dibrell will contend for playing time.

Senior tailback Jamario Thomas is back as well. He led the nation in rushing as a true freshman, but was plagued with injuries as a sophomore and then ran behind a line that underachieved last year.

The focus will be on throwing, but Thomas again breaking 1,000 yards wouldn't be a surprise.

DEFENSE

When North Texas won four straight Sun Belt titles from 2001-2004, it did so with an excellent defense. The group has taken huge steps backward the past two years, but it could be a surprise in 2007. Nine starters are back and the hope is that experience will pay off.

Senior safety Aaron Weathers led the team with 78 tackles, while all-conference linebacker Maurice Holman was second with 74 stops. The line also should be much improved and will be anchored by senior end Jeremiah Chapman, an all-conference pick who had a team-high 10 tackles for loss.

The key will be if the secondary has matured and can avoid giving up the big plays of a year ago. Seniors Roy Loren, Gary Oubre, Roderick Cotton and Cliff Higgs are back, along with sophomores Korey Washington, Zach Babb, Antoine Bush and Kartey Agbottah.

The team's strength on defense should be linebacking, where Holman, junior Colt Mahan, senior Derek Mendoza and junior Germaine Dawson return. The group should be much improved because of its experience. The defensive line is solid and the unit has depth at linebacker and safety.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Mean Green returns junior punter Truman Spencer, who was a second-team all-conference pick last season. He averaged almost 41 yards per attempt and landed 15 inside the 20-yard line. Redshirt freshman Steven Woodward was the only placekicker at spring practice.

— Monte Hale

BUFFALOES

For more coverage of the Buffaloes, visit www.colorado.rivals.com

AT A GLANCE

2006

2-10 overall, 2-6 Big 12 (5th, North)

COACH

Dan Hawkins — At CU: 2-10, 1 year; overall: 94-33-1, 11 years

RETURNING STARTERS

16; 9 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Cody Hawkins, WR/RB Bernard Jackson, RB Hugh Charles, WR Patrick Williams, TE Riar Geer, LB Jordon Dizon, LB Michael Sipili, CB Terrence Wheatley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Last season was miserable, but the Buffs were in every game because of the way they played defense. This group didn't give up big plays, even though it did allow an absurd 66 percent completion rate to opposing quarterbacks. There are 14 defenders back with significant experience.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The Buffs will have a new quarterback with no experience at this level. As many as four offensive linemen could be playing either for the first time or in new positions. The brutal schedule might suppress any progress that has been made from last season.

KEY LOSSES

PK Mason Crosby, OL Brian Daniels, LB Thaddaeus Washington, DE Abraham Wright, S J.J. Billingsley

OVERVIEW

In the second year under Hawkins, the Buffs should be better, and with a difficult schedule, a winning record and bowl appearance would be a significant accomplishment. CU should be competitive within the Big 12 North — with plenty of ground still to make up outside of it.

Offense Tries to Get Back to Hawkins' Usual High Level

Colorado will begin fall practice for the second consecutive year not knowing who its starting quarterback will be, but whoever wins the job won't have much experience.

This was a recipe for disaster in coach Dan Hawkins' first season in Boulder. Hawkins decided on Bernard Jackson, who had spent the previous two years at running back and wide receiver, when his initial choice, James Cox, struggled in a season-opening loss to Division II Montana State and Brian White transferred.

Jackson's inexperience under center and his inability to master the offense led to one of the Buffaloes' worst seasons offensively in decades. They finished 116th in the nation in passing, 102nd in total offense and 107th in scoring.

It was so bad that coaches estimated they used less than 50 percent of the playbook the whole season. It was quite an adjustment for Hawkins, whose teams the previous five years at Boise State regularly scored 30, 40 and 50 points in games.

Coaches avoided the temptation in the second half of 2006 to pull the redshirt off freshman quarterback Cody Hawkins — the coach's son — and insert him in the lineup. They're happy about it now with Hawkins emerging from spring practices with a slight lead to win the job over junior college transfer Nick Nelson.

Two days into spring practice, the super-athletic Jackson had been moved to an all-purpose role, practicing at wide receiver, running back and occasionally taking snaps under center. But by the spring game, in which he didn't throw a single pass, it had become clear he was no longer involved in competition to start at quarterback.

Jackson embraced his role as the new 'slash,' a term made famous by former Colorado quarterback Kordell Stewart when he played for the Pittsburgh Steelers. Jackson will still be on the field each week and he could become one of the most dangerous players in the league if used properly.

"That guy is so darn electric with the ball in his hands," Dan Hawkins said.

Meanwhile, Cody Hawkins, a former Elite 11 quarterback who went 59-0 in his high school career in Idaho, and Nelson, who led his junior college team to a 12-1 record in 2006, both had the offense moving once again by the end of spring.

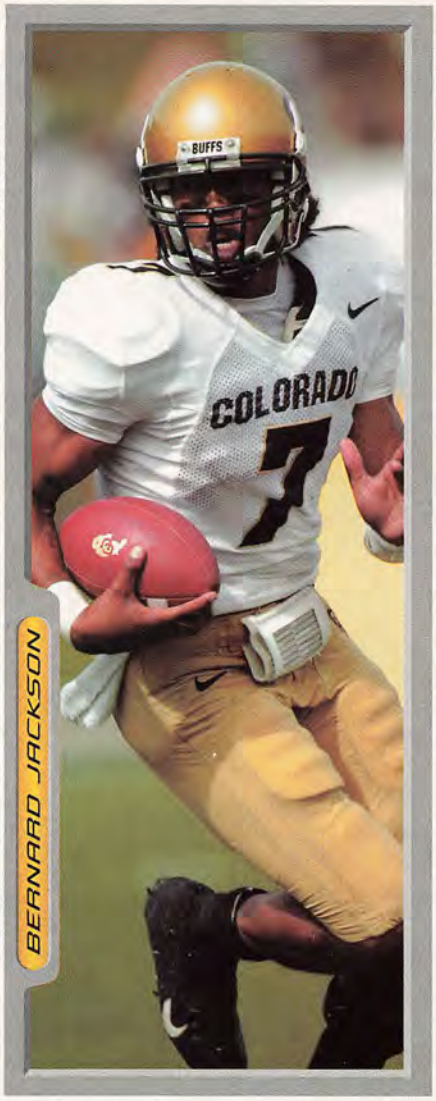
Competition to win the job could run late into fall camp, but no matter the outcome, Colorado won't be one-dimensional any more.

OFFENSE

A new quarterback will make a big difference, but that isn't the only position with something to prove.

An experienced group of wide receivers, who haven't gotten the job done the past three years, could find themselves on the bench if they don't produce. Three talented freshman wideouts are expected to join the team in August and

Terrence Wheatley Photo by John Williamson



BERNARD JACKSON

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 172.9 ypg rushing (5th in Big 12/22nd in NCAA), 118.5 ypg passing (12th/116th), 291.4 ypg total offense (12th/102nd), 16.3 ppg (12th/107th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Cody Hawkins	Fr.	Both of these guys have a lot of room to grow.	Nick Nelson, Jr.
RB	Hugh Charles*	Sr.	Charles can be electric ... and inconsistent.	B. Ellis, Sr./K. Moyd, So.
FB	Maurice Cantrell*	Jr.	This position is used sparingly in this offense.	Jake Behrens, So.
WR	Patrick Williams*	Jr.	Will this finally be the year Williams emerges?	Bernard Jackson, Sr.*
WR	Alvin Barnett*	Sr.	These guys will have to fight off true freshmen.	Dusty Sprague, Sr.
TE	Riar Geer*	So.	This position is the strength of the passing game.	Joe Sanders, Sr.
LT	Tyler Polumbus*	Sr.	Should be among the Big 12's best blockers.	Devin Head, So.
LG	Wes Palazzi	Fr.	A feisty but undersized battler.	Devin Head, So.
C	Daniel Sanders*	Jr.	First year at center, where he will make the calls.	Keenan Stevens, Fr.
RG	Erick Faatagi	Jr.	Coming off knee surgery. Could be a huge addition.	Daniel Sanders, Jr.
RT	Edwin Harrison*	Sr.	Might move to guard with Miller on the way.	Ryan Miller, Fr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 112.4 ypg rushing (4th in Big 12/30th NCAA), 228.5 passing (9th/94th), 340.9 total defense (7th/66th), 22.3 ppg (6th/56th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Maurice Lucas	Jr.	It's time for Lucas to finally play to his potential.	Drew Hudgins, Jr.
DT	George Hypolite*	Jr.	An All-Big 12 kind of player.	Eric Lawson, Fr.
NT	Brandon Nicolas*	Jr.	A durable run stopper who played 611 snaps in 2006.	Jason Brace, So.
DE	Alonzo Barrett	Sr.	Dramatic improvement as pass rusher required.	Marquez Herrod, Fr.
LB	Michael Sipili	So.	Emerged as a freshman as next great CU linebacker.	R.J. Brown, Jr.
LB	Jordon Dizon*	Sr.	He is in any discussion about the nation's best LBs.	Marcus Burton, Jr.
LB	Brad Jones*	Jr.	His speed could be valuable in the pass rush.	Bryan Stengel, So.
CB	Terrence Wheatley*	Sr.	First-team All-Big 12 in 2006 on a 2-10 team.	Jalil Brown, Fr.
CB	Ben Burney	Jr.	Both of these guys have a ton of potential.	Jimmy Smith, Fr.
SS	Lionel Harris*	Sr.	Three double-digit tackle games last season.	Daniel Dykes, Jr.
FS	Ryan Walters*	Jr.	A heavy hitter who must stay healthy in 2007.	Terry Wilson, Jr.

*Returning starter

could play right away.

Of all the veteran receivers on the roster, junior Patrick Williams and seniors Alvin Barnett and Dusty Sprague have the most potential. None of them will knock anyone's socks off and all need to quit dropping passes.

True freshmen Markques Simas, Josh Smith and Kendrick Celestine all could make an immediate impact.

If wide receiver is the question mark, tight end is the exclamation point. The Buffs are loaded again here just two years after sending two tight ends to the NFL.

Riar Geer led the team in receptions and receiving yards as a freshman last season and seniors Joe Sanders and Tyson Devree are big, fast threats as well. Sanders moved back to the position he was recruited to play in the spring after three years at linebacker.

The biggest question at running back is whether junior college transfer P.T. Gates will qualify academically and be able to challenge Hugh Charles, a three-year starter.

The line is the key to it all and there are a lot of questions with this group. Only six were available in spring practice. Tackles Tyler Polumbus and Edwin Harrison are the most experienced, but Harrison could move to guard to make way for true freshman tackle Ryan Miller.

Colorado signed eight offensive linemen in its recruiting class and it might need several to play right away.

DEFENSE

The Buffs should be good against the run. They have 14 defenders who enjoyed significant playing time returning from a defense that finished 30th in the nation against the run in 2006.

The focus here is defending the pass. The Buffs allowed an astronomical 66 percent completion rate, despite having All-Big 12 cornerback Terrence Wheatley and the conference's leader in sacks, defensive end Abraham Wright.

Wheatley is back, but Wright graduated, leaving a sizable hole in the pass rush. No one seemed capable of filling it in spring drills.

Junior end Maurice Lucas has underachieved in his first two seasons, but he has the body and athleticism for success.

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Ryan Miller, OL
Without a doubt, one of the most highly rated prospects in the past few years within the borders of Colorado has been offensive tackle Miller. The five-star prospect was an October commitment for the Buffaloes and is by far the biggest commitment during the Dan Hawkins era. Miller was a two-time All-Colorado selection and named the Gatorade Player of the Year in the state.

P.T. Gates, RB
Colorado needs a major threat at running back to succeed in Dan Hawkins' offense and Gates could be that man. The top-ranked junior college running back in the nation, Gates should see the field right away with his explosive running ability. He's also tough between the tackles and has breakaway speed.

Markques Simas, WR
Nobody had a better year in San Diego than Simas did as a senior. He put up record breaking stats and averaged 19.5 yards per reception. Ranked as one of the top 250 players in the nation, Simas should be able to come in and give CU a great threat at receiver right away.

THE SLEEPER

Josh Smith, WR
Smith was one of the best kept recruiting secrets all year long. The good news for Colorado is that they got in on him early and were rewarded with a big-time commitment. Smith didn't play a lot of football before he arrived in Moorpark, Calif., but he took to the game and as far as athleticism goes, he's off the charts. Smith has recorded a 22.11 long jump and his raw potential at receiver is simply amazing. If he continues to pick up the game and improve, then look out.

Committments	27
Average Stars	2.85
★★★★★	2
★★★★☆	1
★★★☆☆	15
★★☆☆☆	9
Total Stars	77
National Rank: 31	Big 12: 5

2008 NEEDS

The Buffs will need to continue to reload on offense, especially at receiver. They pulled in two quality receivers and more will be needed to run Hawkins' attack. On defense, more help at defensive back is vital. The Buffs must get lockdown corners and ball-hawking safeties in the 2008 class.

— Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
ADKINS, Ethan	OL	6-5, 265	★★★	Castle Rock, CO	Douglas Co.
Rivals.com's No. 8 overall prospect in Colorado. ... No. 70 offensive tackle nationally. ... Class 5A first-team All-State.					
AHLES, Tyler	LB	6-2, 226	★★	San Bernardino, CA	Cajon
Played H-back and linebacker as a senior. ... Had 80 tackles and six sacks as a senior.					
BAHR, Matt	OL	6-4, 261	★★★	Mission Viejo, CA	Mission Viejo
Rivals.com's No. 65 offensive guard nationally. ... Second-team All-State.					
BALLENGER, Matt	QB	6-4, 203	★★★	Nampa, ID	Skyview
Rivals.com's No. 2 overall prospect in Idaho. ... No. 23 pro-style quarterback nationally. ... Passed for 1,800 yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior.					
BEHRENS, Blake	OL	6-4, 280	★★★	Phoenix, AZ	Brophy Prep
Rivals.com's No. 6 overall prospect in Arizona. ... No. 17 offensive guard nationally. ... First-team All-Arizona. ... Did not allow a sack in three seasons.					
CELESTINE, Kendrick	WR	5-11, 173	★★★	Mamou, LA	Mamou
Rivals.com's No. 28 overall prospect in Louisiana. ... No. 79 wide receiver nationally. ... Caught 45 passes for 936 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior.					
DANIELS, Shawn	OL	6-4, 270	★★★	Denver, CO	J.K. Mullen
Rivals.com's No. 11 prospect in Colorado. ... No. 55 offensive guard nationally. ... First-team All-State. ... Brother Brian played offensive guard at Colorado from 2003-06.					
GATES, P.T.	RB	5-11, 195	★★★★★	Mission Viejo, CA	Saddleback CC
Rivals.com's No. 8 overall junior college prospect. ... Rushed for 1,338 yards and 23 touchdowns as a sophomore at Saddleback. ... Also led team with 359 receiving yards and three touchdowns.					
GOREE, Eugene	DT	6-4, 281	★★	Murfreesboro, TN	Riverdale
Mr. Football finalist in Tennessee. ... Had 58 tackles, 12 tackles for a loss and five sacks as a senior.					
HARTIGAN, Josh	LB	6-1, 196	★★	Oakland Park , FL	Northeast
Second-team All-County. ... Had 100 tackles and 10 tackles for a loss and a sack as a senior. ... Enrolled in January.					
HUDGINS, Drew	DE	6-5, 240	★★★	Highland, KS	Highland JC
Rivals.com's No. 46 overall junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... Second-team junior college All-American.					
ILTIS, Mike	OL	6-3, 285	★★	Sarasota, FL	Riverview
Second-team All-State. ... Played guard and tackle on offense and end and tackle on defense.					
JOHNSON, Devan	RB	6-1, 232	★★	Pittsburgh, PA	Woodland Hills
Rivals.com's No. 13 overall fullback nationally. ... Honorable mention All-State.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
LOCKRIDGE, Brian	RB	5-7, 164	★★	Mission Viejo, CA	Mission Viejo
Rushed for 1,383 yards and 16 touchdowns as a senior. ... Averaged 9.2 yards per carry.					
MAIAVA, Kealakai	OL	6-0, 278	★★	Wailuku, HI	Baldwin
Played mostly guard as a senior. ... Did not allow a sack and was called only four penalties during senior season.					
MILLER, Ryan	OL	6-7, 300	★★★★★	Littleton, CO	Columbine
Rivals.com's No. 23 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 2 offensive tackle nationally. ... Top overall prospect in Colorado. ... Class 5A All-State. ... Did not allow a sack and was called for only one penalty in 14 games as a senior.					
NELSON, Nick	QB	6-2, 215	★★	Mission Viejo, CA	Saddleback CC
Enrolled in January. ... First-team All-Conference. ... Passed for 2,241 yards and 18 touchdowns as a sophomore at Saddleback.					
OBI, Conrad	DE	6-4, 240	★★★	Loganville, GA	Grayson
Rivals.com's No. 41 overall prospect in Georgia. ... No. 54 strongside defensive end nationally. ... Missed all but four games of senior season with hand injury.					
PERKINS, Anthony	ATH	5-10, 177	★★★	Northglenn, CO	Northglenn
Rivals.com's No. 6 prospect in Colorado. ... No. 60 athlete nationally. ... Class 5A first-team All-State. ... Rushed for 1,626 yards and 15 touchdowns as a senior. ... As a safety, had 40 tackles and two interceptions. ... Grandson of NFL running back Don Perkins.					
PERRI, Chris	DT	6-4, 265	★★★	Oakland, CA	Laney College
Played at San Jose State in 2005. ... All-Conference at Laney College.					
SHIELDS, Lagrone	DE	6-2, 239	★★★	Memphis, TN	Ridgeway
Rivals.com's No. 22 overall prospect in Tennessee. ... No. 53 strongside defensive end nationally. ... Had 31 tackles for a loss as a senior.					
SIMAS, Markques	WR	6-1, 198	★★★★	San Diego, CA	Mira Mesa
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 20 wide receiver nationally. ... No. 25 overall prospect in California. ... Had 778 receiving yards as a senior.					
SMITH, Josh	ATH	6-2, 175	★★★	Moorpark, CA	Moorpark
Honorable mention All-League as a senior. ... Had 477 receiving yards, 10 touchdowns and six interceptions as a senior.					
SMITH, Lamont	DB	5-9, 153	★★	Pittsburgh , PA	Central Catholic
Second-team All-State. ... Played primarily running back in high school.					
TAU, Sione	OL	6-6, 284	★★★	Honolulu, HI	Damien Memorial
Rivals.com's No. 5 overall prospect in Hawaii. ... No. 33 offensive tackle nationally.					
VAIOMOUNGA, Nate	LB	5-10, 191	★★★	Corona, CA	Corona
Rivals.com's No. 96 prospect in California. ... No. 56 outside linebacker nationally.					
WRIGHT, Anthony	DB	6-0, 180	★★★	Compton, CA	Compton
Rivals.com's No. 53 overall prospect in California. ... No. 31 safety nationally.					

BUFFALOES SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
30	JOEL ADAMS	S	5-11	195	Jr	Steamboat Springs
17	ALVIN BARNETT	WR	5-11	190	Sr	Tulsa, OK
47	ALONZO BARRETT	DE	6-3	235	Sr	Alabaster, AL
59	B.J. BEATTY	OLB	6-1	230	Fr	Kaaawa, HI
41	JAKE BEHRENS	FB	6-0	230	So	Omaha, NE
50	AUSTIN BISNOW	LS	6-0	210	Fr	Washington, DC
41	KYLE BLACK	S	5-11	195	Fr	Highlands Ranch
78	JASON BRACE	DT	6-4	265	So	Spanaway, WA
29	CHA'PELLE BROWN	WR	5-7	175	So	La Puente, CA
23	JALIL BROWN	CB	6-1	205	Fr	Phoenix, AZ
34	R.J. BROWN	ILB	6-1	225	Jr	Honolulu, HI
42	BENJAMIN BURNEY	CB	5-11	195	Jr	Lone Tree
54	MARCUS BURTON	ILB	6-0	245	Jr	Channelview, TX
32	MAURICE CANTRELL	FB	6-0	240	Jr	Cedar Rapids, IA
2	HUGH CHARLES	TB	5-8	190	Sr	Keller, TX
48	CODY CRAWFORD	WR	5-11	175	Jr	San Diego, CA
33	PATRICK DEVENNY	TE	6-3	240	So	Roseville, CA
84	TYSON DEVREE	TE	6-5	245	Sr	Hudsonville, MI
14	MATTHEW DILALLO	P	6-1	205	So	Wellington, FL
44	JORDON DIZON	ILB	6-0	225	Sr	Kauai, HI
70	JUSTIN DRESCHER	LS	6-1	230	So	Southlake, TX
57	JAKE DUREN	LB	6-0	230	So	Littleton
9	DANIEL DYKES	S	6-2	205	Jr	Los Alamitos, CA
39	KEVIN EBERHART	PK	5-11	195	Sr	Broomfield
27	BYRON ELLIS	TB	6-0	215	Sr	Culver City, CA
61	ERICK FAATAGI	OL	6-2	310	Jr	Carson, CA
36	REGGIE FOSTER	S	5-10	200	So	Long Beach, CA
87	RIAR GEER	TE	6-3	245	So	Grand Junction
86	CAMERON HAM	WR	6-1	195	Fr	Haxtun
25	LIONEL HARRIS	S	6-0	195	Sr	Manvel, TX
76	EDWIN HARRISON	OL	6-4	300	Sr	Houston, TX
55	JOSH HARTIGAN	OLB	6-1	196	Fr	Fort Lauderdale, FL
7	CODY HAWKINS	QB	5-11	190	Fr	Boise, ID
18	JONATHAN HAWKINS	CB	5-11	185	Fr	Perris, CA
72	DEVIN HEAD	OL	6-4	285	So	Corona, CA
90	MARQUEZ HERROD	DE	6-2	255	Fr	Escondido, CA
49	DREW HUDGINS	DE	6-4	235	Jr	Spring Hills, KS
86	GEORGE HYPOLITE	DT	6-1	285	Jr	Los Angeles, CA
10	BERNARD JACKSON	QB	6-0	200	Sr	Corona, CA
43	SAMSON JAGORAS	FB	5-10	225	Sr	Arcadia, CA
40	BRAD JONES	OLB	6-3	225	Jr	East Lansing, MI
82	MICHAEL KACHMER	WR	6-0	185	So	Wheaton, IL
97	TAJ KAYNOR	DT	6-4	265	So	Englewood
69	ERIC LAWSON	DT	6-3	260	Fr	Sedalia
91	MAURICE LUCAS	DE	6-4	255	Jr	Denver
38	CHASE MCBRIDE	WR	5-7	160	Sr	Thornton
6	GARDNER MCKAY	CB	5-11	160	Jr	Inglewood, CA
21	SCOTTY MCKNIGHT	WR	5-10	185	Fr	Coto de Caza, CA
23	KEVIN MOYD	TB	5-7	195	So	Miramar, FL
36	CORY NABORS	TB	5-9	185	Fr	Aurora
3	NICK NELSON	QB	6-1	220	Jr	Mission Viejo, CA
94	BRANDON NICOLAS	DT	6-3	280	Jr	Santa Ana, CA
65	WES PALAZZI	OL	6-1	285	Fr	Plano, TX
89	JIM PARRA	PK	5-6	140	Fr	Greenwood Village
77	TYLER POLUMBUS	OL	6-8	300	Sr	Englewood
1	STEPHONE ROBINSON	WR	5-8	190	Sr	Denver
75	DANIEL SANDERS	OL	6-3	305	Jr	Vista, CA
13	JOE SANDERS	TE	6-3	235	Sr	Nashville, TN
88	DEVIN SHANAHAN	TE	6-5	230	So	Highlands Ranch
10	MICHAEL SIPILI	ILB	6-1	250	So	Honolulu, HI
45	JEFF SMART	ILB	5-11	210	So	Boulder
28	BRET SMITH	S	5-11	190	Fr	Highlands Ranch
3	JIMMY SMITH	CB	6-2	200	Fr	Colton, CA
92	NATE SOLDER	TE	6-8	270	Fr	Buena Vista
83	DUSTY SPRAGUE	WR	6-4	190	Sr	Holyoke
52	BRYAN STENGEL	OLB	6-2	210	So	Durango
56	KEENAN STEVENS	OG	6-3	275	Fr	Monument
95	TOM SUAZO	P	5-11	190	Jr	Glenwood Springs
8	DEMETRIUS SUMLER	TB	5-10	210	Fr	San Diego, CA
15	RYAN WALTERS	S	5-11	200	Jr	Aurora
26	TERRENCE WHEATLEY	CB	5-10	170	Sr	Richardson, TX
4	PATRICK WILLIAMS	WR	6-2	200	Jr	DeSoto, TX
20	TERRY WILSON	S	5-10	205	Jr	Chino, CA
80	JARRELL YATES	WR	5-11	200	So	Denver

NOTEBOOK

Colorado prides itself on being a top academic institution, but the high academic standards have hurt recent football recruiting classes, especially since the hubbub of 2004 attracted so much negative attention to the program.

A handful — possibly as many as seven or eight — members of the 2007 recruiting class were at risk of not meeting the schools admissions standards as of late spring. As has happened in the past, those players might be eligible under NCAA standards, but can still be turned away by the school.

At the end of spring practices, coach **Dan Hawkins** said he thought things were going well, but "it's not over until it's over."

It's seldom that CU doesn't lose at least two or three recruits to this problem, but Hawkins has said a large number of true freshmen likely will play in 2007, making it even more important that as many as possible qualify.

One example is Saddleback College running back **P.T. Gates**, who was trying to pass nearly 30 credit hours between January and August to be admitted.

And when players with a questionable academic past are admitted, they can fall flat on their face. That was the case with running back Thomas Perez, who was suspended for spring ball for poor grades and was booted from the team when his grades didn't improve.

• When Hawkins took over Colorado less than two years ago, only 11 players could power clean 300 pounds. At the outset of spring practice in March, the number had improved to nearly 50.

Hawkins and strength and conditioning coordinator **Jeff Pitman** have not been afraid to show players the door if they're not tough enough to handle heightened expectations in the weight room and in conditioning.

Both men believe in the system because it worked so well for them at Boise State.

"If we're not up to snuff, we're going to be 2-10 again," Pitman said.

• Redshirt freshman linebacker **Justin Nonu's** future in college football was in doubt late after the spring because of chronic back problems.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Att	Cmp	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
B. Jackson	12	103.3	219	108	7	49.3	1298	7	63	108.2
J. Cox	4	71.4	30	11	0	36.7	124	0	42	31.0

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
H. Charles	12	139	800	21	779	5.6	1	44	64.9
B. Jackson	12	155	884	207	677	4.4	7	62t	56.4
M. Holliday	12	105	525	13	512	4.9	1	52	42.7

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
R. Geer	12	24	261	10.9	3	28t	21.8
A. Barnett	12	21	232	11.0	1	38	19.3
P. Williams	12	19	242	12.7	1	42	20.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Dixon 137, T. Washington 107, B. Jones 72
Interceptions: T. Wheatley 5, R. Walters 2, five with 1
Sacks: A. Wright 11.5, J.Dizon 4, W.Boye-Doe 2.5, G. Hypolite 2.5
Tackles for loss: A. Wright 15.5, G. Hypolite 12.5, J. Dizon 11

Results

(2-10, 2-6)

L	MONTANA STATE	10-19
L	at Colorado State	10-14
L	ARIZONA STATE	3-21
L	at Georgia	13-14
L	at Missouri	13-28
L	BAYLOR	30T 31-34
W	TEXAS TECH	30-6
L	at Oklahoma	3-24
L	at Kansas	15-20
L	KANSAS STATE	21-34
W	IOWA STATE	33-16
L	at Nebraska	14-37

GEORGE HYPOLITE

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

His production could soar if he played each down as if it were his last. Junior college transfer Drew Hudgins should push Lucas in fall camp after offseason knee surgery.

Senior Alonzo Barrett will start at the other end spot and figures to be pushed for playing time by redshirt freshman Marquez Herrod, a player with fierce determination.

The middle of the line is solid with tackles George Hypolite, Brandon Nicolas, Tay Kaynor and Jason Brace all gaining valuable experience a year ago. True freshmen Lagrone Shields and Conrad Obi could figure into the mix for a coaching staff that likes to play as many as 12 defensive linemen.

Wheatley is one of three starters returning in the secondary along with safeties Ryan Walters and Lionel Harris. Junior Ben Burney, a converted safety, emerged from spring ball as the starting cornerback opposite Wheatley. Talented redshirt freshmen Jalil Brown and Jimmy Smith should also play.

When this group does catch on, it figures to produce big plays. Coordinator Ron Collins' defenses at Boise State routinely ranked among the top 20 in the nation in interceptions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Hawkins won't be trying any more 60-yard field goals because Mason Crosby, the program's all-time leading scorer, is now in the NFL. Kevin Eberhart, a talented kicker in his own right, steps in as a senior after waiting patiently for four seasons. Eberhart has the leg to get it there from 50 yards, but not 60.

The Buffs must improve in all other areas after finishing 104th in punt returns, 95th in kickoff returns and 31st in net punting one year after finishing first.

Last season's starting quarterback, Bernard Jackson, could emerge as a weapon for kickoff returns and senior

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

LB Jordon Dizon

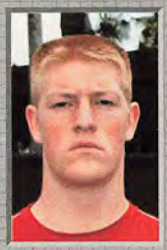
In a program that has produced a lengthy list of NFL linebackers, this happy Hawaiian has a chance to be one of the all-time best in Boulder. Dizon, a four-year starter, likely will leave the Buffs among the top five tacklers in program history. ... He is fifth in the NCAA in career tackles (280) among active players. ... Dizon is a team captain with 38 games under his belt, including 34 starts. ...He was named to every major All-Big 12 team in 2006 in some capacity.

EMERGING STAR

QB Cody Hawkins

The head coach's son and a former Elite 11 star, who has never lost a game as a starting quarterback. He is 59-0 dating back to sixth grade. ... Growing up with a head coach as a father has made him a heady player whose understanding of the offense is unmatched among his teammates. ... He was a two-time state Player of the Year in high school in Idaho. ... He completed 72 percent of his passes as a senior and threw for 42 touchdowns in 12 games.

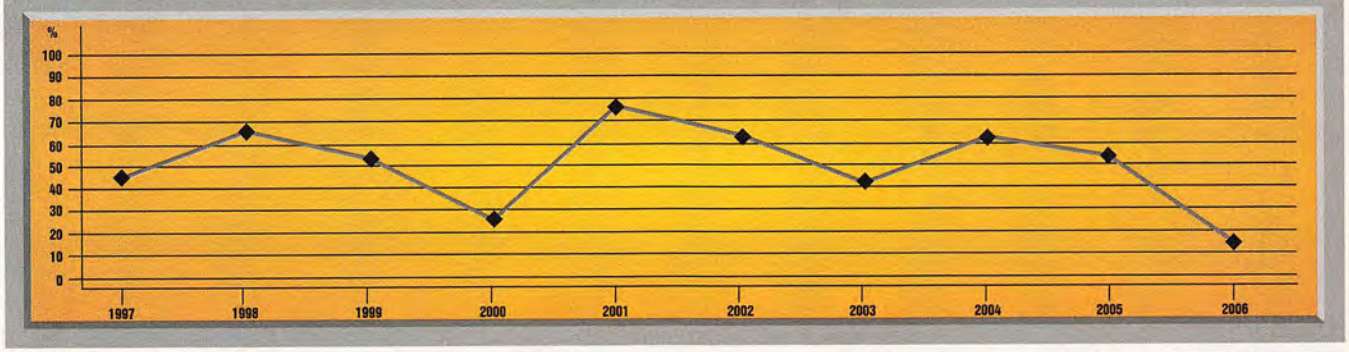
TOP NEWCOMER



OT Ryan Miller

The first five-star recruit to choose CU in five years. ... Miller was on every reputable high school All-America team in 2006, playing just down the road at Columbine High School in Littleton, Co. ... At 6-7 and 300 pounds, he is a prototypical tackle, and he also played on the defensive line in high school. ... If Miller doesn't play as a true freshman, it will be a major surprise because the team has a severe shortage of offensive linemen.

Colorado's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

JORDON DIZON

PHOTO BY BRIAN SPURLOCK

Dizon Hopes Next Dive is into NFL

Brian Cabral has seen a lot of players come and go in 17 seasons coaching linebackers at Colorado, and the NFL has been the next stop for nearly a dozen of them.

Cabral expects senior Jordon Dizon to join that elite group.

Cabral recruited Dizon from Hawaii as an athlete without a defined position. Dizon, who grew up cliff diving and hunting wild boar with nothing but a knife, began making plays almost immediately. He quickly found a home in the heart of the defense as a linebacker with a nose for the ball.

He made more than his share of plays almost by accident, relying on instinct instead of strictly following assignment and scheme. He has developed into a rare four-year starter.

"In the past, he did a lot of things and didn't know why he was doing them," Cabral said. "I think with his understanding of this defense now, he'll make a lot more big plays."

Dizon was named to the Butkus Award watch list before his junior season, and though he wasn't among the finalists, his performance justified the honor and likely set up another run at the award this fall.

He posted 137 tackles during a 2-10 season in which the offense couldn't score but the defense kept CU in every game. Dizon fell just short of the school record for third-down stops with 17.

Dizon produced those numbers playing in a new scheme behind an inexperienced pair of defensive tackles. Those tackles will be better this season, as will the rest of a defense that finished 30th in the nation against the run.

"We have 12 games under our belts with this defense," Dizon said. "With experience comes confidence, and with confidence, you play a lot faster and a lot smarter. Experience is huge in football."

Dizon will now be the man leading boys. His teammates voted him a team captain for 2007 not long after last season ended.

He has 280 tackles in his first three seasons. With just an average year by his standards, he could vault into the top five tacklers in program history.

"It's a legacy I guess you could say, but it doesn't really mean much to me personally," he said. "It means more to the team that I actually do good things here. I would just be happy to be recognized as somebody who has been here and done something."

Stephone Robinson claims he has his confidence back for punt return duty after falling apart last season.

Punter Matt DiLallo is finally striking the ball like he deserves the scholarship Gary Barnett gave him two years ago.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Colorado has been one fearless program over the past 20 years, willing to play anyone in the non-conference portion of the schedule. It has worked against the Buffs sometimes, and this could be one of those years.

The in-state rivalry with CSU in the season opener has become one of the best early season games in the nation in recent years. The Buffs then go to Arizona State before the home opener against Florida State. The Seminoles are one of three programs with national championships in the last 10 years on the Buffs' 2007 schedule.

This is one of the best home slates in school history with Oklahoma, Nebraska and a talented Missouri team coming to town. An Oct. 27 trip to Texas Tech is the toughest conference road trip.

— Kyle Ringo

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	(Denver) Colorado State
Sept. 8	at Arizona State
Sept. 15	FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 22	MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 29	OKLAHOMA
Oct. 6	at Baylor
Oct. 13	at Kansas State
Oct. 20	KANSAS
Oct. 27	at Texas Tech
Nov. 3	MISSOURI
Nov. 10	at Iowa State
Nov. 23	NEBRASKA

AT A GLANCE

2006

7-6 overall, 6-2 C-USA (2nd, West)

COACH

David Bailiff — At Rice: 1st year; overall: 21-15, 3 years

RETURNING STARTERS

14; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Chase Clement, WR Jarett Dillard, WR Joel Armstrong, LG Robby Heos, RT Lute Barber, DE George Chukwu, LB Brian Raines, S Andrew Sendejo

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Last year's dynamic duo of WR Jarett Dillard and QB Chase Clement return. Much of last year's offensive line also returns, meaning that the offense should again put up solid numbers. Joel Armstrong will have a full year at receiver and could shine.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Rice had momentum under Todd Graham; can it keep it going through a coaching change? Rice lost three players from its defensive front and a pair from its secondary, significant holes as Bailiff switches to a 4-2-5 scheme. The graduation of Quinton Smith leaves a big void in the backfield.

KEY LOSSES

DL Courtney Gordon, RB Quinton Smith, P Jared Scruggs, LT Rolf Krueger

OVERVIEW

Rice snuck up on some teams in Conference USA last fall to earn a bowl bid, but the Owls won't have that same luxury this year. The offense will be fine, but something of a rebuilding year on defense puts Rice on the bowl bubble.

Addition of Bailiff Should Keep Everything in Order

OFFENSE

New coach David Bailiff will continue with a spread offense that former coach Todd Graham used so well last season. Any discussion of that prolific offense starts with All-American wideout Jarett Dillard, who led the nation with 21 touchdown catches.

His 1,274 yards made him the first Owl to eclipse the 1,000-yard mark. It should be more of the same this year for the 5-11 wideout.

Other receivers include converted quarterback Joel Armstrong and Tommy Henderson, plus talented sophomores Toren Dixon and Corbin Smiter. At tight end, Will Moss returns from injury, and lanky sophomore Taylor Wardlow could catch plenty of passes.

Quarterback Chase Clement returns healthy after missing four games because of injury in 2006. The Owls were 6-2 and averaged more than 30 points per game with him taking snaps. Clement threw for 1,787 yards and 21 touchdowns.

Rice must find a new featured back. Sophomore Marcus Knox, a former receiver and a special teams standout in 2006, made a move in the spring and pulled ahead in a crowded competition.

Sophomore C.J. Ugokwe and seniors Bio Bilaye-Benibo and Bubba Heard also could get their share of touches, although Heard (no carries in the spring game) might be the odd man out.

Four starters on the line return, including all-conference guard Robby Heos. Austin Wilkinson has started 24 consecutive games at center, and right tackle Lute Barber started every game in 2006. David Berken returns at right guard.

DEFENSE

Bailiff will change from a 3-3-5 scheme to a 4-2-5 look. Leading the front will be 305-pound George Chukwu, honorable mention all-conference in 2006 at end, where he had eight tackles for a loss.

Jonathan Cary also will be a key performer as will end Dietrich Davis, who returns to his old spot after switching to linebacker in 2006.

All-conference Brian Raines holds down one linebacker spot after making 118 tackles, 12.5 for a loss. Competing for the other slot will be Robert Calhoun, Ryan Craig, sophomore Terrance Garmon, who had two interceptions in 2006, and Vernon James.

The Owls have several holes to fill in the secondary.

Corners Brandon King and Ja'Corey Shepherd were solid last year when healthy. Sophomore safety Andrew Sendejo had 53 tackles as a freshman.

Gary Anderson and Bencil Smith bring experience to the secondary and a host of other players will be in the mix.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Walk-on kicker Clark Fangmeier became the starter early last season and hit eight of 11 field goal attempts to earn a spot on C-USA's All-Freshman team.

Luke Juist will once again handle kickoffs and long field goals, but Rice will have a new punter.

— Steve Hunt

AT A GLANCE

2006

4-8 overall, 1-7 Big 12 (6th, North)

COACH

Gene Chizik — At ISU and overall: 1st year

RETURNING STARTERS

11; 4 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Bret Meyer, WR Todd Blythe, LB Alvin Bowen, WR Milan Moses, RB J.J. Bass, DE Rashawn Parker, FS James Smith, K Bret Culbertson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The most important position on the field is in good hands with senior quarterback Bret Meyer, a four-year starter. If the offensive line gives him time, Meyer has star receiver Todd Blythe to throw to, as well as some other capable targets.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There is not a running back on the roster that has proven himself at the Division I-A level. The defense hopes to get help from newcomers, but returns many of the same players who were abused last season, particularly in a secondary that allowed opponents to complete 72.5 percent of their passes.

KEY LOSSES

WR Austin Flynn, C Scott Stephenson, DT Brent Curvey, CB DeAndre Jackson, FB Ryan Kock, LB Tyrone McKenzie

OVERVIEW

With a lineup as unsettled as this one going into August, it's hard to see the Cyclones coming out much better than the 4-8 mark they put up a year ago. There's been a huge change in attitude and personnel within the program, but the talent is too thin and the schedule too difficult to expect Chizik to deliver a winner this early.

Attention! Cyclones Are Marching to a New Beat

It's not quite the military, but the Iowa State football program under new general Gene Chizik is being built with some of those same principles.

"We are looking for a few good men," Chizik said this spring, his first as a head coach at any level.

The team Chizik took over from Dan McCarney last November needed the hard-edged approach to the game that he and his staff have brought. The Cyclones finished 4-8 a year ago and won just one game in Big 12 Conference play. That victory over Missouri, like the other wins last season, was decided in the final seconds.

Discipline. Toughness. Expectation. Those are some of the buzzwords Chizik has brought to ISU after successful stints as defensive coordinator at Central Florida, Auburn and most recently Texas.

Don't like it? Take a walk. Players are catching on to the fact that it is Chizik's way or no way.

"He runs a tight ship. I love it," said senior tight end Ben Barkema.

Chizik knows a turnaround in Ames won't happen overnight. The last two programs he coached (Auburn, Texas) were ready-made winners.

But Chizik is not going to tolerate losing. He will push ISU players to compete at their limit.

"There is high expectation in everything we do," he said. "If they are not doing that, we are putting pressure on them to get that done."

Success can be achieved in Ames. McCarney took the Cyclones to bowl games five times in a span of six years. But none was considered a big-time bowl, which contributed to the coaching change as expectations rose with the program's improvement.

Athletic director Jamie Pollard said Chizik was his No. 1 choice from the start to replace McCarney.

He was the young candidate who could have probably landed a head coaching job with more cache than ISU. It helped that his former boss and something of a mentor, Texas' Mack Brown, was a Cyclone assistant many years ago.

Now the two will compete against each other on a regular basis.

For Chizik, the job is a major adjustment. He has to see the bigger picture, not just one half of it.

"Now I really care about the offense," he said. "I don't think I ever looked at a punter or a kicker unless we were trying to block something. It's been an eye-opening experience for me. I'm learning every day."

OFFENSE

Bret Meyer is the most accomplished and experienced quarterback in the Big 12. Whether ISU's offensive line can keep the four-year starter on his feet long enough to add to his sterling career is up for debate.

Meyer will have four new faces protecting him this fall, all of whom have little or no experience at the Division I-A level.

Just as he did on the other side of the

Alvin Bowen Photo by John Williamson

PHOTO BY SPORTPICS

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 101.8 ypg rushing (10th in Big 12/99th in NCAA), 216.1 ypg passing (6th/44th), 317.8 ypg total offense (9th/81st), 18.8 ppg (11th/92nd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Bret Meyer*	Sr.	Hoping to cap off a prolific career.	Austen Arnaud, Fr.
RB	J.J. Bass	Jr.	Newcomer needs to be the real deal.	Jason Scales, Jr.
FB	Brian Ekwelunda	So.	No rushes, catches in 2006.	Taylor Mansfield, Fr.
WR	Todd Blythe*	Sr.	Big year would impress NFL people even more.	Marquis Hamilton, So.
WR	R.J. Sumrall	Jr.	Looking like a solid No. 2 target.	Milan Moses, Sr.
TE	Ben Barkema*	Sr.	Good receiver, an even better run blocker.	Brandon Tinlin, Sr.
LT	Doug Dedrick	Jr.	Looks like the best of the junior college transfer linemen.	Matt Hulbert, Fr.
LG	Reggie Stephens	So.	Got his feet wet in 2006 as a part-time starter.	Joe Blaes, Jr.
C	Brandon Johnson	Jr.	Back to offense after a stint on defensive line.	Tom Schmeling, Jr.
RG	Tom Schmeling*	Jr.	Eight starts makes him most experienced lineman.	Alex Alvarez, So.
RT	Lee Tibbs	Sr.	Clock is ticking for him to contribute.	Joe Vanstrom, Jr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 153.8 ypg rushing (11th in Big 12/89th in NCAA), 238.5 passing (11th/101st), 392.2 total defense (11th/102nd), 30.8 ppg (11th/105th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Rashawn Parker	So.	Disappeared after great start to '06 season.	Christopher Lyle, Jr.
DT	Michael Tate	Jr.	Junior college transfer needs to help in a hurry.	Bryce Braaksma, Sr.
DT	Athyba Rubin*	Sr.	Big body is strong on run support.	Nate Frere, So.
DE	Kurtis Taylor	Jr.	Finally gets his shot after knee injury.	Travis Ferguson, Jr.
LB	Jon Banks*	Sr.	Moved up from secondary to be solid linebacker.	Adam Carper, Jr.
LB	Alvin Bowen*	Sr.	Tracks you down, then punishes.	Michael Bibbs, Jr.
LB	Fred Garrin	So.	Was a pleasant surprise during standout spring.	Jesse Smith, So.
CB	Chris Singleton*	Jr.	Most polished of the young defensive backfield.	Zac Sandvig, Fr.
CB	Allen Bell	Jr.	Talented newcomer tough to keep off the field.	Drenard Williams, So.
SS	Caleb Berg*	Sr.	Solid, not spectacular. Cyclones will take that.	Brandon Hunley, Jr.
FS	James Smith	So.	Out to prove he's worthy of high expectations.	Steve Johnson, So.

*Returning starter

ball, Chizik signed a handful of junior college transfers to try to provide immediate help to an offensive unit in need. He nabbed three offensive linemen who arrived on campus in January and are expected to be starters or backups.

The most anticipated newcomer is tailback J.J. Bass, a powerful runner from El Camino Community College in California.

If he can prove himself during training camp, Bass easily could overtake returners Jason Scales and Jason Harris as the No. 1 back. Scales, a junior, has had an injury-plagued career, and Harris is just coming back to the position after a year at cornerback.

Meyer knows what he's got in receiver Todd Blythe. The 6-5 senior can be a dominant force when given the chance, which he surely will be in the Cyclones' new spread offense.

"We are going to be able to throw a lot of things at a defense. It's pretty wide open," said Blythe, who far and away holds the school record for touchdown receptions with 26.

Junior R.J. Sumrall, senior Milan Moses, sophomore Marquis Hamilton and tight end Ben Barkema are also legitimate threats in the passing game. Moses had a huge finish to the '06 season, but missed all of spring practice because of injury.

Transfer Wallace Franklin, a 6-3 burner from Butler (Kan.) Community College, is also someone to keep an eye on.

DEFENSE

If there's one thing to get excited about with Iowa State's defense, it's that it can only get better. It was downright awful a year ago.

The Cyclones allowed 30.8 points a game (11th in Big 12), 238.5 passing yards (11th), 153.8 rushing yards (11th), 26 touchdown passes (12th) and a 72.5 percent completion rate (12th) while intercepting just six passes (12th).

Enter Chizik, one of the game's brightest defensive minds. Granted, it was at Texas and Auburn, but Chizik's defenses were among the toughest to move the ball on.

"It gets you fired up," linebacker Alvin Bowen said. "You know that he's been there already and he knows what he's talk-

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Jamicah Bass, RB

The nation's No. 15 junior college prospect, four-star all-purpose back Bass made a late December pledge to the Cyclones. Bass may not have the eligibility of a high school player, but should make an instant impact for Iowa State. Bass was originally from Florida and held scholarship offers from the likes of Colorado, Ole Miss, N.C. State and Oregon State.

Phillip Bates, QB

Bates is one of the more heralded players in Nebraska and he turned down offers from other big-time schools to play quarterback at Iowa State. While his style might not totally fit what new coach Gene Chizik wants, he definitely gives the Cyclones a good dual-threat option at quarterback for the future.

Allen Bell, DB

Bell had been a long time Ole Miss commitment, but late in the process the new coaches at Iowa State got involved and got him to make a January official visit. That visit later led him to switch and sign with the Cyclones. He is the lockdown cover corner that has been missing in Ames the past few seasons.

THE SLEEPER

Fabian Brown, LB

Brown, out of Des Moines Roosevelt, was a player that Iowa State found at their summer camp. The 6-3, 230-pounder impressed the Cyclone coaches with his ability to get all over the field, turn, run and make big impacts with the ball carrier. With his size, he might even end up putting his hand on the ground at defensive end, but in the end it might not matter because the 'Clones definitely found themselves a heck of a steal.

Committments	25
Average Stars	2.44
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	1
★★★☆☆	9
★★☆☆☆	15
Total Stars	61
National Rank: 59	Big 12: 11

2008 NEEDS

Iowa State needs a major infusion of team speed all over the field. Whether it's at running back, receiver, linebacker or defensive back, it's clear that the Cyclones need athletes that can keep up with the speed of the rest of the Big 12.

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
ALVAREZ, Alex	OL	6-3, 290	●●	Kilgore, TX	Kilgore College
Enrolled in January. ... Started at left tackle at Kilgore as a sophomore. ... Started at defensive tackle and offensive tackle at League City (Texas) Clear Creek High.					
BASS, Jamicah	RB	6-1, 210	●●●●	Torrance, CA	El Camino CC
Rivals.com's No. 15 overall junior college prospect. ... Signed with N.C. State out of Longwood (Fla.) Lyman before transferring to El Camino. ... Rushed for more than 1,200 yards and 13 touchdowns at El Camino.					
BATES Phillip	QB	6-2, 189	●●●	Omaha, NE	North
Rivals.com's No. 2 overall prospect in Nebraska. ... No. 16 dual-threat quarterback nationally. ... Passed for 2,963 yards in two seasons. ... Father Phillip Bates, Sr., played fullback at Nebraska and in the NFL.					
BAYSINGER, Trey	OL	6-6, 290	●●	Dallas, TX	Carter
All-District. ... Father was All-State at Dallas Carter. ... Clocked at five seconds in 40-yard dash.					
BELL, Allen	DB	6-2, 190	●●●	Independence, KS	Independence CC
Rivals.com's No. 55 overall junior college prospect. ... All-conference defensive honorable mention. ... Averaged 23 yards per kickoff return and 18 yards per punt return.					
BELL, Cameron	RB	6-1, 210	●●	Round Rock, TX	Stony Point
Rushed for 909 yards and 11 touchdowns in seven games as a senior. ... Averaged 6.4 yards per carry. ... Two-time first-team All-Conference. ... Rushed for 1,200 yards as a junior.					
BIBBS, Michael	LB	6-1, 225	●●	Wesson, MS	Copiah-Lincoln CC
All-State in junior college. ... Had 69 tackles, three tackles for a loss and tow forced fumbles. ... Played wide receiver as a freshman at Copiah-Lincoln.					
BLACK, Jerrod	DT	6-2, 280	●●	Houston, TX	Cypress Falls
Had 121 tackles, 20 tackles for a loss and eight sacks as a senior. ... Had 66 tackles and four sacks as a junior.					
BLAES, Joe	OL	6-2, 290	●●●	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville CC
Rivals.com's No. 58 overall junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... Junior college second-team All-American as a sophomore. ... First-team All-Conference.					
BROWN, Fabian	LB	6-3, 230	●●●	Des Moines, IA	Roosevelt
Rivals.com's No. 6 overall prospect in Iowa. ... No. 69 outside linebacker nationally. ... Had 75 tackles, seven tackles for a loss a sack as a senior.					
CARPENTER, James	OL	6-4, 302	●●	Hephzibah, GA	
All-Area. ... Started at tackle, but projects as a guard. ... Standout special teams player.					
DEDRICK, Doug	OL	6-5, 285	●●	Scottsdale, AZ	Scottsdale CC
Started 20 games at Scottsdale at offensive tackle. ... All-State offensive lineman as a senior at Tempe (Ariz.) Corona Del Sol.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
FRANKLIN, Collin	TE	6-6, 230	●●	Santa Clarita, CA	College of the Canyons
Had six catches for 74 yards as freshman at College of the Canyons. ... Played defensive tackle at Simi Valley (Calif.) as a senior.					
FRANKLIN, Wallace	WR	6-3, 175	●●●	El Dorado, KS	Butler CC
Junior college All-American. ... Caught 24 passes for 514 yards and seven touchdowns. ... Originally signed with Nebraska.					
GREEN, Anthony	LB	6-0, 220	●●	Missouri City, TX	Fort Bend Marshall
Had 80 tackles and three forced fumbles as a senior. ... District first-team All-Defense.					
KELLMAN, Randy	DE	6-6, 261	●●	Kissimmee, FL	Celebration
All-District and All-Region. ... First Division I player from Celebration. ... Originally from London, England.					
KLEREKOPER, Joseph	OL	6-6, 300	●●	Longview, TX	Pine Tree
Second-team All-District. ... Started two years at offensive tackle and one year at defensive tackle.					
LYLE, Christopher	DE	6-4, 255	●●●	El Dorado, KS	Butler CC
Honorable mention All-Conference. ... Had 31 tackles and six sacks at Butler CC.					
MATHIS, Curtiz	LB	6-3, 215	●●	Harvey, IL	Thornton Township
All-State and All-Conference. ... Had 82 tackles, seven tackles for a loss and five forced fumbles.					
MATTHEWS, A.J.	DB	6-3, 185	●●	Clearwater, FL	Countryside
Could play safety or outside linebacker. ... Had 107 tackles, 16 tackles for a loss and six sacks as a senior. ... Forced four fumbles and had two interceptions.					
McMAHON, Joe	OL	6-4, 290	●●●	Joliet, IL	Joliet JC
Junior college All-American. ... First-team All-Conference and All-Region. ... Helped Joliet (Ill.) Downer's Grove North High to Class 4A state title as senior.					
OSEMELE, Kelechi	OL	6-5, 298	●●●	Houston, TX	Langham Creek
Projects as offensive tackle. ... Benches 315 pounds. ... Squats 370. ... Two-year starter.					
SANDVIG, Alex	WR	6-0, 168	●●	West Des Moines, IA	Valley
Rivals.com's No. 7 overall prospect in Iowa. ... First-team All-Conference. ... Had 38 catches for 632 yards and five touchdowns as a senior.					
TATE, Michael	DT	6-5, 285	●●●	Brenham, TX	Blinn CC
Redshirted one season at Arkansas before transferring to Blinn. ... Played on junior college national title team.					
WEIR, Chris	DT	6-3, 270	●●	Independence, KS	Independence CC
Played high school football at Miami Beach (Fla.) ... Had 52 tackles, 10 tackles for a loss, six sacks and two forced fumbles.					

CYCLONES SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
96	AUSTIN ALBURTIS	DL	6-2	266	Fr	Dallas, TX
77	ALEX ALVAREZ	OL	6-2	290	So	League City, TX
4	AUSTEN ARNAUD	QB	6-3	222	Fr	Ames
16	JON BANKS	LB	6-2	219	Sr	East Moline, IL
41	BEN BARKEMA	TE	6-3	252	Sr	Muscatine
21	CALEB BERG	DB	6-1	202	Sr	York, NE
66	JOE BLAES	OL	6-2	297	Jr	Cherryvale, KS
1	TODD BLYTHE	WR	6-5	209	Sr	Indianola
15	ALVIN BOWEN	LB	6-2	216	Sr	East Orange, NJ
93	BRYCE BRAAKSMA	DE	6-3	254	Sr	Sheldon
13	MIKE BRANDTNER	P	6-1	208	So	Bettendorf
6	CHRIS BROWN	DB	5-10	171	Jr	Gainesville, TX
10	ADAM CARPER	LB	6-3	216	Jr	Clarinda
84	DERRICK CATLETT	TE	6-4	251	So	Fort Collins, CO
25	ZAK CHIKE	WR	6-0	187	Fr	Rochester, NY
33	JOE CONKLIN	DB	5-10	174	So	Davenport
37	BRET CULBERTSON	PK	6-6	179	Sr	Des Moines
75	DOUG DEDRICK	OL	6-4	271	So	Tempe, AZ
45	STEVEN EBNER	FB	5-10	228	Sr	Sioux City
29	BRIAN EKWELUNDU	FB	5-11	231	So	Corpus Christi, TX
38	BRADY ERVIN	DB	6-2	205	Fr	Eden Prairie, MN
83	TRAVIS FERGUSON	DL	6-5	250	Jr	Waterloo
51	EVAN FICK	LB	6-0	185	So	Mitchellville
62	NATE FRERE	DL	6-2	306	So	Muscatine
25	NICK FRERE	DL	6-2	244	Jr	Muscatine
43	FRED GARRIN	LB	6-1	217	So	Shepherd, TX
19	JOSH GRIEBAHN	PK	5-8	207	Sr	Iowa City
57	MATT GROCHALA	LB	5-9	202	Fr	Des Moines
82	MARQUIS HAMILTON	WR	6-3	217	So	Oklahoma City, OK
34	NICK HARKLAU	DB	6-0	183	So	Humboldt
22	JASON HARRIS	RB	5-11	208	Jr	Clearwater, FL
99	NICK HOWE	DL	6-3	260	Sr	State Center
67	MATT HULBERT	OL	6-7	280	Fr	Ankeny
20	BRANDON HUNLEY	DB	5-11	201	Jr	Grandview, MO
41	CHASE HURTIG	DL	6-3	239	Fr	Hull
81	BAILEY JOHNSON	DL	6-3	265	Fr	Homewood, IL
60	BRANDON JOHNSON	OL	6-3	309	Jr	Rushville, NE
21	JOSH JOHNSON	RB	5-11	216	So	Ponca City, OK
23	STEVE JOHNSON	DB	5-11	196	So	Denver, CO
14	HOUSTON JONES	WR	6-1	182	So	Oklahoma City, OK
52	MIKE KNAPP	OL	6-3	271	So	West Des Moines
88	BEN LAMAAK	TE	6-4	292	Fr	Cedar Rapids
42	MATT LEADERS	LB	6-0	210	Fr	Omaha, NE
86	JUSTIN LILLIE	WR	6-5	218	So	Earlham
11	CHRIS MAHOSKI	PK	5-10	178	So	Bettendorf
26	TAYLOR MANSFIELD	FB	6-1	255	Fr	Decorah
9	DEVIN MCDOWELL	DB	5-9	174	Fr	Garland, TX
46	CONNOR MCMAHON	PK	5-11	221	Fr	Fairfield
46	KRIS MEANS	LB	6-0	234	Fr	Grand Junction, CO
18	NATE MECHAELSEN	QB	6-2	209	Sr	Kamrar
35	CHRIS MEHRING	LB	5-10	213	Sr	Oak Lawn, IL
9	EUSEPH MESSIAH	WR	5-10	174	Jr	Bettendorf
7	BRET MEYER	QB	6-3	204	Sr	Atlantic
2	DERRON MONTGOMERY	WR	6-1	176	Fr	Garland, TX
32	MILAN MOSES	WR	6-1	201	Sr	Waterloo
90	PATRICK NEAL	DL	6-0	234	Fr	West Des Moines
37	MICHAEL O'CONNELL	DB	6-0	200	Fr	Cedar Rapids
29	RASHAWN PARKER	DL	6-0	249	So	Ponca City, OK
48	MATT PURVIS	DS	6-2	227	Sr	Tempe, AZ
32	JOSH RAVEN	LB	5-11	221	So	Fort Myers, FL
71	ATHYBA RUBIN	DL	6-3	321	Sr	Pensacola, FL
31	JUSTIN RUMPLE	DB	6-3	204	Fr	Casey
14	ZAC SANDVIG	DB	5-10	183	Fr	West Des Moines
6	JASON SCALES	RB	5-9	217	Jr	West Des Moines
70	TOM SCHMELING	OL	6-3	295	Jr	Atlantic
24	DEREC SCHMIDGALL	LB	6-1	223	So	Lincoln, NE
36	MATT SCRIBBINS	WR	6-3	207	So	Clear Lake
11	CHRIS SINGLETON	DB	5-10	191	Jr	Fort Myers, FL
66	KYLE SLIFKA	DL	6-2	262	Fr	Cresco
61	NICK SLOBIDSKY	OL	6-2	305	Jr	Naperville, IL
2	JAMES SMITH	DB	5-8	192	So	Council Bluffs
54	JESSE SMITH	LB	6-0	233	So	Altoona
50	SEAN SMITH	OL	6-4	266	Fr	Wildwood, MO
65	PATRICK STEINBACH	OL	6-8	304	Fr	Albia
73	REGGIE STEPHENS	OL	6-3	322	So	Rowlett, TX
59	LANDON STREIT	OL	6-5	316	Jr	Barnum
5	R.J. SUMRALL	WR	6-1	200	Jr	Orlando, FL
47	KURTIS TAYLOR	DL	6-2	255	Jr	Fort Dodge
39	RICKY THOMPSON	RB	5-9	203	Jr	Ames
76	LEE TIBBS	OL	6-4	315	Sr	Oklahoma City, OK
80	BRANDON TINLIN	TE	6-4	254	Sr	South Lake Tahoe, CA
74	JOE VANSTROM	OL	6-6	299	Jr	Ham Lake, MN
79	JOSE VARGAS	OL	6-3	327	Fr	Sulphur Springs, TX
53	EVAN VENCIL	OL	6-3	255	So	Ankeny
55	ANTHONY WALKER	OL	6-2	290	Sr	Spencer, OK
7	DRENARD WILLIAMS	DB	5-11	175	So	Beaumont, TX
24	JAKE WILLIAMS	WR	6-2	195	Fr	West Des Moines
45	DAVID WONDERS	DS	6-0	274	Fr	Waukee
17	JOEL ZITEK	WR	6-2	199	So	Ulysses, NE

NOTEBOOK

The words that come out of players' mouths isn't the language coach **Gene Chizik** is most interested in.

In his eyes, the body speaks loudest.

"If we go down two or three touchdowns, does their body language change?" Chizik said.

"That'll tell you right quick what they think of themselves and our football team. Championship teams feel like no matter what the circumstances, they have a chance to come back and win."

• This isn't the first time ISU's top three coaches have been together on the same staff.

Chizik, offensive coordinator **Robert McFarland** and defensive coordinator **Wayne Bolt** all were members of Clemson's coaching staff during the 1988 and '89 seasons. The Tigers, under head coach Danny Ford, went 20-4 in those years and won the Citrus and Gator bowls.

Chizik and McFarland also worked together at Central Florida and Stephen F. Austin.

• Chizik is a longtime defensive coordinator and first-time head coach, so you could understand if he is a little apprehensive about relinquishing control of the defense. Not so much, he said.

McFarland (offense) and Bolt (defense) will have autonomy.

"I have to have somebody to blame it on," Chizik joked. "I'll have my input, but on game day it's their show."

• Like most of ISU's returning players, loyalty to former coach Dan McCarney and his assistants was high.

Some have left the program. Most have stayed. Quarterback **Austen Arnaud** grew up in Ames and was close to McCarney and quarterbacks coach Todd Fitch.

Arnaud, a redshirt freshman, said he had no thoughts about transferring to another school. "This is my town," he said. "I don't know where else to go."

• Beset by injury and inexperience a year ago, ISU's defense was one of the worst in the Big 12 and all of college football.

It'll get a boost this fall with a handful of key players back at full strength. Linebacker **Adam Carper** (knee), defensive end **Kurtis Taylor** (knee) and **James Smith** (ankle) all are starter material.

Defensive end **Rashawn Parker** played well in the first half of last season, then hit the freshman wall and never got back up.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Att	Cmp	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
B. Meyer	12	117.77	374	211	12	56.4	2546	12	44	212.2
A. Flynn	12	86.53	3	1	0	33.3	19	0	19	1.6

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
L. Hicks	8	107	547	24	523	4.9	2	58	65.4
R. Kock	12	74	332	0	332	4.5	6	24	27.7
B. Meyer	12	137	439	262	177	1.3	6	18	14.8

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
A. Flynn	12	41	470	11.5	0	37	39.2
J. Davis	11	36	508	14.1	2	44	46.2
T. Blythe	9	34	484	14.2	8	31	53.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: A. Bowen 155, T. McKenzie 129, J. Banks 99
Interceptions: C. Singleton 2, four with 1
Sacks: S. Moorehead 8.5, B. Curvey 7, R. Parker 3
Tackles for loss: B. Curvey 12.5, S. Moorehead 12, T. McKenzie 9.5

Results

(4-8, 1-7)

W	TOLEDO	30T 45-43
W	UNLV	16-10
L	at Iowa	17-27
L	at Texas	14-37
W	NORTHERN IOWA	28-27
L	NEBRASKA	14-28
L	at Oklahoma	9-34
L	TEXAS TECH	26-42
L	at Kansas State	10-31
L	KANSAS	10-41
L	at Colorado	16-33
W	MISSOURI	21-16

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

ing about."

Bowen is the Cyclones' most valuable defensive asset. The senior led college football with 12.92 tackles a game last season and oozes the physical brand of defense that Chizik loves.

There are some workable pieces returning with nose guard Athyba Rubin clogging the middle, cornerback Chris Singleton on the outside and some key players in between returning from injury.

Linebacker Adam Carper and defensive end Kurtis Taylor both are coming off knee surgery and hope to regain their starting spots. Carper played the first five games last year, and Taylor was hurt in the preseason.

Seniors Caleb Berg (safety), Jon Banks (linebacker) and Bryce Braaksma (tackle) can get the job done, but are far from standouts.

As with the offense, newcomers are being looked at for significant roles. Defensive back Allen Bell looks as if he could be the one who has the most impact.

Defensive line, in particular, is an area ISU coaches really targeted with three players among the 11 transfers who signed in February. Chizik needs that component of his defense to be stout.

"If we have defensive linemen sitting in the laps of our linebackers, we have no shot," he said.

SPECIAL TEAMS

It's been a rags-to-riches story for kicker Bret Culbertson. Once a walk-on turned to out of sheer desperation, the senior now is among the most accurate kickers in school history at 75.7 percent. Culbertson will handle the placekicking duties one last time, hoping to exorcise some of the demons he faces because of critical late-game misses.

Sophomore Mike Brandtner is the No. 1 punter for the second consecutive year. He was solid in '06 with a 41.2-yard average and no punts blocked.

As for the return game, Milan Moses

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Bret Meyer

Meyer is coming off a so-so year but remains one of ISU's best and most experienced players. The four-year starter leads all returning Division I-A quarterbacks with 7,979 yards of total offense. ... He is second to Michigan's Chad Henne (7,777) with 7,348 passing yards. ... Meyer also is dangerous as a runner with 631 career yards. ... He scored six of his nine career rushing touchdowns a year ago.

EMERGING STAR

WR Milan Moses

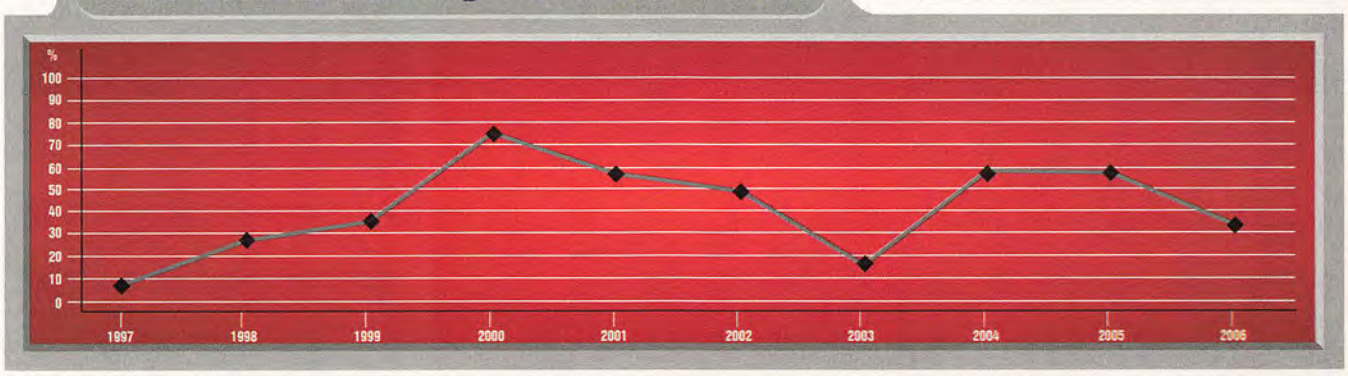
Senior receiver is looking to finish his career with a bang after a productive end to his junior season. ... Moses caught 19 passes for 243 yards in the final three games of 2006. ... He's recovered from Crohn's Disease but sat out spring drills with an undisclosed injury. ... Moses also proved himself as one of the Big 12's top threats on kickoffs, averaging 21.7 yards per return.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB J.J. Bass

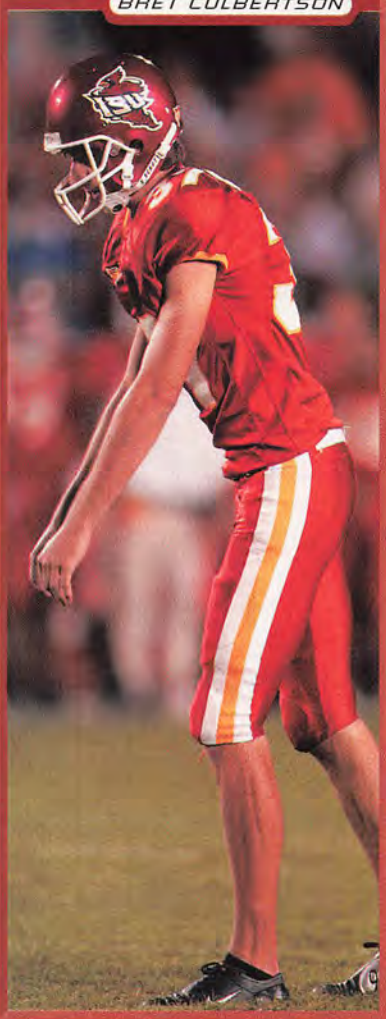
Tailback from El Camino (Calif.) Community College has a chance to win the starting job if he performs well in preseason drills. ... Bass rushed for more than 1,200 yards and 13 touchdowns last season. ... He also caught 20 passes and scored twice on receptions. Originally signed with N.C. State, then picked ISU over Oregon State, Colorado and Ole Miss, among others.

Iowa State's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

BRET CULBERTSON



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY PHOTO

A Game-Winner Would Be a Kick

Bret Culbertson is one of the most accurate placekickers in Iowa State history.

Unfortunately, his legacy (so far) won't reflect his success.

Culbertson has earned the reputation as a poor pressure kicker, one who has cost ISU more than it has gained.

The senior has one final chance at redemption this season. He not only wants to keep pace with his 75.6 percent success rate, Culbertson wants to be staring up at the goal posts with the game on the line.

Maybe then he'll rid himself of the stigma that's always seemed to stick to him.

"It would be awesome," Culbertson said. "That's what I'm looking for — to get a shot like that. But hopefully games aren't that close."

For his career, Culbertson is 28 of 37 on field goal tries. He's also been successful on all 74 extra-point attempts.

But it's hard to forget the painful misses with games and Big 12 North Division championships on the line. Culbertson's most famous shank was a badly missed chip shot in the 2004 season finale against Missouri. That miss in the final minutes of regulation would have capped a worst-to-first season and sent the Cyclones to the Big 12 title game.

A year later at Kansas, he misfired on a kick that would've given ISU the lead on the first possession of overtime.

To his credit, Culbertson has always faced the media after these crushing blows. A journalism and mass communications major, he would want the same accountability from a kicker if he was seeking postgame comments.

"No regrets," he said. "I've had some heartbreakers, but I think that's made me into who I am on and off the field."

Now one of the most recognizable players on the team, Culbertson not so long ago was the tall, lanky unknown walk-on from Des Moines who walked onto the field at Colorado in 2004 without a name on the back of his jersey.

Nicknamed "Shaggy" for his resemblance to the "Scooby Doo" character, the 6-6, 179-pound Culbertson is savoring his final months in uniform.

He is changing his approach to the ball this season under new special teams coach Jay Boulware. Culbertson has extended his range over the past two years and would like to be consistent from everywhere on the field.

"At first I was hesitant about messing with anything, but I changed my steps up a bit and I feel a lot more consistent," he said.

showed he's got some juice on kickoffs with a 21.7-yard average while filling in during the last half of the year.

Fellow receiver R.J. Sumrall is the only Cyclone with game experience catching punts. Someone will have to emerge there.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Ten of the Cyclones' 12 opponents won at least six games last season, and among those 10, only Kent State (6-6), Kansas (6-6) and Division I-AA Northern Iowa (7-4) did not make the postseason.

ISU's annual game against Iowa comes in Week 3. That Sept. 15 meeting begins a brutal stretch of games.

After playing the first three at home, the Cyclones play at Toledo, Nebraska and Texas Tech. The next month will be just as difficult with league superpowers Texas and Oklahoma coming to Ames, followed by a trip to Missouri, then Kansas State at home.

The start and finish aren't too bad; it's the middle that could cripple the Cyclones.

— Eric Peterson

SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	KENT STATE
Sept. 8	NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 15	IOWA
Sept. 22	at Toledo
Sept. 29	at Nebraska
Oct. 6	at Texas Tech
Oct. 13	TEXAS
Oct. 20	OKLAHOMA
Oct. 27	at Missouri
Nov. 3	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 10	COLORADO
Nov. 17	at Kansas

AT A GLANCE

2006

6-6 overall, 4-4 C-USA (4th, West)

COACH

Phil Bennett — At SMU and overall: 17-41, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS

18; 9 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Justin Willis, RB DeMyron Martin, RB James Mapps, WR Emmanuel Sanders, DE Cory Muse, LB Reggie Carrington

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

There is the prospect of good days ahead with 18 returning starters, and a star quarterback in sophomore Justin Willis, who has a strong arm and can make all the throws. The offense will be potent, including a couple of threats in the backfield.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Improving the ground game — especially in short yardage situations — is crucial. The road schedule is tricky with games at division foes Houston and Tulsa, as well as one at East favorite Southern Miss.

KEY LOSSES

TE Ryan Kennedy, WR Bobby Chase, DB Joe Sturdivant

OVERVIEW

SMU was only a few plays away from ending a 22-year bowl drought last fall. Bennett sees this year's Ponies contending for a conference title. At the least, they should make a bowl game for the first time since the 1980s and could very well be C-USA's surprise team in 2007.

Ponies Keep Pushing Toward Return to Postseason

OFFENSE

Quarterback Justin Willis returns after a stellar season in which he was selected the Conference USA Freshman of the Year.

Willis threw for 2,047 yards, a school-record 26 touchdowns and only six interceptions. A broken hand suffered in January limited his spring reps, but he should be ready to roll for two-a-days.

In the backfield, DeMyron Martin, who missed five games because of injury, still had 394 yards on 92 touches. He appears fully healed and will headline a solid group of backs that also includes senior Cedrick Dorsey. James Mapps, who earned 2006 C-USA All-Freshman honors, also will see time.

The team's top receiver, Emmanuel Sanders, returns after catching 46 balls for 605 yards and nine touchdowns as a freshman. Bobby Chase leaves a void that promising junior Columbus Givens hopes to fill. Givens finished last season with 306 yards on 22 catches and four touchdowns.

Devin Lowery, a starting cornerback last season, and Zack Sledge also should figure in the mix.

The Mustangs lose tight end Ryan Kennedy, but junior Vincent Chase (6-5, 255) has the size to pick up the slack. He played in all 12 games last season, but caught only three passes for 23 yards and one touchdown.

SMU returns four starters on the line, but there are a few changes.

Ben Poynter moves from center to left tackle, while Mitch Enright is the new center. Returning starters Sean Lobo and Caleb Peveto were absent from spring practice due to injury, but both should be fine when fall practice commences. Also back is right tackle Kenard Burley.

DEFENSE

The Ponies must replace four starters on defense, and three of those openings are on the line. One returnee is second-team all-conference end Cory Muse, who played through knee problems in 2006.

One new starter up front is Patrick Handy, who made two starts at end last year. Look for Charlie Berry to emerge at defensive tackle after playing 30 games at that spot over the past three seasons. Chris Parham is likely the nose guard.

At linebacker, Reggie Carrington, Tony Hawkins and Wilton McCray are back for one final go-around. Last year, they combined for 203 tackles, five sacks and three interceptions.

Secondary coach Phil Bennett essentially plays three corners, and all three are back in Brandon Jones, Jonathan Lindley and Bryan McCann. Battling for the safety spot will be Bryce Hudman and junior college transfer Rock Dennis.

SPECIAL TEAMS

All-conference punter Thomas Morstead will continue to handle the placekicking duties, while fellow specialist Kellis Cunningham focuses on kickoffs. Speedster Jessie Henderson is back to handle kick returns and there are a number of punt-return options in Columbus Givens, Bryan McCann, Emmanuel Sanders and Zack Sledge.

— Steve Hunt

JAYHAWKS

For more coverage of the Jayhawks, visit www.kansas.rivals.com

AT A GLANCE

2006

6-6 overall, 3-5 Big 12 (4th, North)

COACH

Mark Mangino — At Kansas and overall: 25-35, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS

16; 6 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Kerry Meier, FB Brandon McAnderson, TE Derek Fine, OL Anthony Collins, DT James McClinton, LB Mike Rivera, CB Aqib Talib

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Despite the horrific 2006 pass defense numbers, KU has a star cornerback in Aqib Talib leading the secondary. Kerry Meier developed into a solid dual-threat quarterback when his bad shoulder wasn't bothering him. Dexton Fields, Marcus Henry and Derek Fine provide solid receiving targets.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There isn't a clear-cut candidate to replace workhorse RB Jon Cornish. Kansas' pass defense was last in Division I-A last year, and it was a total defensive letdown. A pass rush is sorely needed, and only James McClinton has proven consistently capable up front.

KEY LOSSES

RB Jon Cornish, C David Ochoa, WR Brian Murph, G Bob Whitaker

OVERVIEW

Kansas took a step back last season, although it was bowl eligible at 6-6. This is an important season for the Jayhawks to re-establish their place in the postseason. Considering the easy non-conference schedule, and no Texas or Oklahoma on the Big 12 slate, the Jayhawks should find a bowl bid within their reach.

Leaders' Mantra: Get Fired Up and Fight to the Finish

Kansas coach Mark Mangino calls it "the 800-pound gorilla."

And if that primate translates to the Jayhawks playing with a chip on their shoulders in 2007, then something good will come from that extra weight.

Despite being bowl eligible in 2006 with a 6-6 mark, the Jayhawks did not receive a postseason invitation, ending a frustrating season and making an offseason filled with early-morning conditioning and strength training that much longer.

The Jayhawks enter the season more informed of the terms "bowl eligible" and "bowl bound." And they're out to make sure there's no difference this time around.

"If that's not motivation for you, you're in the wrong sport," Mangino said. "You should pick something else up."

An incredible string of fall-from-ahead losses defined the '06 campaign. Kansas had a second-half lead in five of its six setbacks, including an amazing collapse at Baylor when a 35-17 lead with 10 minutes left turned into a 36-35 heartbreaker.

"We're disappointed, because we had opportunities to win games that we did not," Mangino said. "We were angered by it, and we're determined to get it right."

So what's the first step?

Shoring up the woeful pass defense — last in Division I-A in '06 — would be a start. Replacing All-Big 12 running back Jon Cornish must be a top priority. Keeping key players healthy, like quarterback Kerry Meier, would also help matters.

But personnel concerns are only so much. The Jayhawks sometimes seemed to take second-half leads and hold on for dear life, instead of putting the opponents away with authority.

Attitude, more than talent, was a problem, and it kept the Jayhawks home for the holidays.

Looking for leaders, several of the experienced players — like cornerback Aqib Talib and defensive tackle James McClinton — are making note of it for 2007.

"Ray Lewis, he has his team fired up the whole game," Talib said of the Baltimore Ravens linebacker. "Four quarters. That's my job."

Four-quarter football was the University of Kansas' downfall in 2006. It's the Jayhawks' goal in 2007.

OFFENSE

Ed Warinner — a former offensive line coach at KU — has moved back to Lawrence to take over coordinator duties, and he's bringing new ideas that might stay a secret until Sept. 1. While a dramatic makeover isn't expected, there will be some changes in an offense that often sputtered.

"I'd say probably no more than 50 percent of it is new stuff," Mangino said during the spring. "There's a lot of stuff we retained. It's not a completely overhauled offense."

Part of what did change, though, is a system now designed to tone down the cerebral part of the quarterback's game. The Jayhawks have two sophomores — Kerry Meier and Todd Reesing — atop the depth chart, and the goal is to make the mental aspect less taxing so the

Aqib Talib Photo by Icon SMI

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 176.4 ypg rushing (4th in Big 12/19th in NCAA), 197.7 ypg passing (9th/60th), 374.1 ypg total offense (7th/33rd), 29.0 ppg (7th/29th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Kerry Meier	So.	Solid when healthy, but can he stay healthy?	Todd Reesing, So.
RB	Jake Sharp	So.	Quick and elusive, but can he be a workhorse?	Angus Quigley, So.
FB	Brandon McAnderson*	Sr.	Great blocker and decent ball-carrier.	Sam Archer, So.
WR	Dexton Fields*	Jr.	Team leader in receptions; KU's most reliable target.	Tertavian Ingram, Fr.
WR	Marcus Henry*	Sr.	Great wide receiver body starting to live up to hype.	Marcus Herford, Jr.
TE	Derek Fine*	Sr.	Primarily a blocker, but also has great hands.	Marc Jones, Sr.
LT	Anthony Collins*	Jr.	Switching from right tackle; Kansas' most talented lineman.	Ian Wolfe, Fr.
LG	Adrian Mayes	Jr.	Native Kansan climbs to top of depth chart.	Matt Darton, Jr.
C	Ryan Cantrell	Jr.	Played sparingly last year but has past experience.	John Marshall, Fr.
RG	Chet Hartley	Jr.	Junior college transfer brings immediate impact.	Rameses Arceo, Jr.
RT	Cesar Rodriguez*	Sr.	Swapping spots with Collins after two years at left tackle.	Ian Wolfe, Fr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 109.0 ypg rushing (3rd in Big 12/28th NCAA), 269.1 passing (12th/119th), 378.1 total defense (10th/94th), 25.5 ppg (9th/81st)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Russell Brorsen*	Jr.	Not a freak athlete, but consistently makes plays.	Jeff Wheeler, So.
DT	James McClinton*	Sr.	Should compete for first-team All-Big 12 honors.	Caleb Blakesley, So.
DT	Todd Haselhorst	Jr.	Injury-plagued career getting back on track.	Justin Pessetto, Fr.
DE	John Larson	Jr.	Walk-on made an unexpected impact in 2006.	Max Onyegbule, Fr.
LB	James Holt	Jr.	Weight-room fanatic back after foot injury.	Jake Schermer, So.
LB	Mike Rivera*	Jr.	Best athlete on unit; has a mean streak about him.	Joe Mortensen, Jr.*
LB	Arist Wright*	So.	Teammates call him most improved on defense.	Olaitan Oguntodu, So.
CB	Aqib Talib*	Jr.	One of the top cornerback talents in college football.	Gary Green, Jr.
CB	Kendrick Harper	Jr.	Junior college transfer wasted little time standing out.	Anthony Webb, So.*
SS	Tang Bacheyie	Jr.	Canadian has decent size, athleticism.	Patrick Resby, Jr.
FS	Darrell Stuckey	So.	Injury-riddled rookie season ended strongly.	Sadiq Muhammed, Sr.*

*Returning starter

execution comes easier.

Meier and Reesing both played last year as freshmen, and both showed bright sparks and frustrating funks throughout their playing time.

Meier is the incumbent and frontrunner for the job, throwing 13 touchdown passes and 10 interceptions in an injury-plagued freshman season. Bigger and stronger than Reesing, Meier is a better running quarterback. Reesing, however, is better at improvising and might have the stronger arm.

The bigger question on offense is this: Who can replace departed running back Jon Cornish?

The answer is nobody — and everybody.

Making up for Cornish's 1,457 rushing yards likely will require help from the entire backfield — Meier included. Fullback Brandon McAnderson will get more carries, and tailback duties will have to go young players.

Speedy sophomore Jake Sharp is an elusive playmaker. Angus Quigley, recovering from an injury, is another option. So, too, is freshman Donte Bean.

Most of the pass-catching options return. That includes tight end Derek Fine and receivers Dexton Fields, Marcus Henry and Marcus Herford.

DEFENSE

Pointing fingers for a horrific pass defense can often — and unfairly — mean exclusively blaming the secondary.

While KU's secondary had its share of faults last season, the problem started up front with the lack of a pass rush, and it continued to the linebacker play.

"Any time you can put pressure on the quarterback, that's your number one pass defense," Mangino said.

"Force him to make quick decisions. Force him to throw the ball before he'd really like to. I think that's the first line of pass defense. It's important to have some speed off the edge."

That said, an entire upgrade is necessary for the Jayhawks and it requires a need for rapid maturation. Only one senior — defensive tackle James McClinton — projects to start on defense, with the large majority of contributors being sophomores and juniors.

However, KU's defense does have

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Ryan Murphy, DB

Like last year, the highest-ranked pickup for the Jayhawks was a cornerback, and he wasn't far away. Lawrence (Kan.) Free State's Ryan Murphy, rated as the nation's No. 19 corner, made a summer-time commitment to KU and never looked back. As a do-it-all athlete, he rushed for 600 yards and threw for 1,662 more as a junior.

Patrick Resby, DB

Another player expected to help bolster the defensive backfield right away is junior college transfer Patrick Resby. The 6-2, 195-pounder was one of the more heavily recruited defensive backs in the Texas junior college ranks. He chose Kansas over several other offers. He should come in and see action at one of the safety spots.

Carmon Boyd-Anderson, RB

KU has had a great string of running backs under Mark Mangino and Boyd-Anderson could be next in line. One of the most explosive rushers in Texas, the Jacksonville, Texas, star was a big-time recruiting catch. Explosive, strong, fast and physical, Boyd-Anderson has the tools to be special in KU's attack.

THE SLEEPER

Anthony Davis, DB

Three-star Tulsa (Okla.) East Central cornerback Anthony Davis had an astounding 19 interceptions over the past two seasons. His offers didn't show it, as his only other was from Tulsa. However, that was not based on ability but rather grades. He could be a guy to watch out for in the next couple of years.

Committments	22
Average Stars	2.68
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	1
★★★☆☆	13
★★☆☆☆	8
Total Stars	59
National Rank: 50	Big 12: 9

2008 NEEDS

Defensive line will be a big deal for Kansas in 2008. They need more depth — especially at defensive tackle. More help at linebacker and receiver are also much needed.

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
BARFIELD, Isiah	ATH	6-0, 175	★★	Haven, KS	Haven
Rivals.com's No. 14 overall prospect in Kansas. ... Three-time All-Conference running back. ... Two-time All-League defensive back. ... Rushed for 500 yards, had 304 receiving yards and 600 kick return yards as a senior.					
BOYD-ANDERSON, Carmon	RB	6-1, 200	★★★	Jacksonville, TX	Jacksonville
Rivals.com's No. 77 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 36 running back nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Rushed for 1,674 yards and 18 touchdowns as a senior.					
BRISCOE, Dezmon	WR	6-2, 180	★★★	Cedar Hill, TX	Cedar Hill
First-team All-District. ... Caught 37 passes for 708 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior. ... Played on state championship team as a senior.					
DAVIS, Anthony	DB	5-11, 184	★★★	Tulsa, OK	East Central
Rivals.com's No. 15 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 53 cornerback nationally. ... District defensive MVP. ... Two-time All-State. ... Had seven interceptions as a senior. ... Led state with 12 interceptions as a junior.					
DORSEY, Patrick	DT	5-11, 263	★★★	Houston, TX	Yates
Rivals.com's No. 68 defensive tackle nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Played on three district championship teams. ... All-Greater Houston.					
DUDLEY, Drew	LB	6-2, 212	★★★	College Station, TX	Consolidated
Rivals.com's No. 27 inside linebacker nationally. ... Third-team All-State. ... District defensive MVP. ... Had 128 tackles and eight sacks as a senior.					
FOSTER, Steven	RB	6-3, 230	★★★	Sedgwick, KS	Sedgwick
Rivals.com's No. 8 prospect in Kansas. ... No. 12 fullback nationally. ... Four-time All-State as running back and linebacker. ... Rushed for 1,768 yards and 22 touchdowns as a senior. ... Holds school record for career rushing yards and career tackles.					
HARPER, Kendrick	DB	5-10, 187	★★★	El Dorado, KS	Butler CC
Rivals.com's No. 89 overall junior college prospect. ... Had six interceptions at Butler in 2006.					
HARRIS, Chris	ATH	6-0, 180	★★	Bixby, OK	Bixby
All-State defensive back. ... District Player of the Year. ... Had 61 tackles and four interceptions as a senior. ... Had 839 receiving yards. ... Played for district championship team.					
HARTLEY, Chet	OL	6-4, 310	★★★	El Dorado, KS	Butler CC
Rivals.com's No. 69 overall junior college prospect. ... Played left tackle at Butler. ... Could play guard.					
HATCH, Jeremiah	OL	6-3, 301	★★★	Dallas, TX	Carter
Rivals.com's No. 14 center nationally. ... All-State as a senior. ... All-District as a junior. ... Played on four consecutive district championship teams.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
HOGE, Stephen	K	6-4, 200	★★	Oklahoma City	Putnam City North
Rivals.com's No. 21 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 17 kicker nationally. ... All-state in 2004 and 2006. ... Made 25 of 30 career field goal attempts. ... Had 85 percent of kickoffs for touchbacks.					
JOHNSON Jr., Richard	DE	6-4, 255	★★★	Jefferson City, MO	
Rivals.com's No. 16 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 47 strongside defensive end nationallHad 68 tackles, 14 tackles for a loss and five sacks as a senior.					
LAPTAD, Jake	DE	6-4, 215	★★	Jenks, OK	Jenks
Started at tight end and defensive end. ... Second-team All-State at defensive end as a senior. ... Had 39 solo tackles and 12.5 sacks as a senior. ... Played on three district championship teams.					
LEWIS, Rell	ATH	5-10, 180	★★★	Muskogee, OK	Muskogee
Rivals.com's No. 19 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... All-State. ... District Offensive MVP. ... Passed for 1,400 yards and 10 touchdowns as a senior. ... Rushed for more than 1,200 yards and 14 touchdowns as a junior.					
MURPHY, Brian	RB	5-8, 163	★★	Lawrence, KS	Free State
Rivals.com's No. 16 overall prospect in Kansas. ... Non-scholarship athlete. ... All-State. ... Rushed for 1,095 yards and 17 touchdowns as a senior. ... Rushed for more than 1,000 yards as a junior. ... Twin of Kansas signee Ryan Murphy.					
MURPHY, Ryan	DB	5-10, 171	★★★★	Lawrence, KS	Free State
Rivals.com's No. 3 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 19 cornerback nationally. ... First-team All-State quarterback. ... Second-team All-State defensive back. ... Had 2,984 yards of total offense as a senior. ... Intercepted eight career passes.					
RESBY, Patrick	DB	6-2, 195	★★★	Corsicana, TX	Navarro CC
Rivals.com's No. 51 overall junior college prospect. ... Projects as strong safety.					
SPIKES, Jeff	OL	6-5, 316	★★	Painesville, OH	Harvey
First-team All-State. ... Averaged double-double per game in basketball.					
SPRINGER, Justin	LB	6-4, 220	★★★	Los Fresnos, TX	Los Fresnos
Rivals.com's No. 39 inside linebacker nationally. ... District Defensive Player of the Year. ... Had 140 tackles, seven sacks and three interceptions as a senior.					
STEWARD, A.J.	QB	6-4, 210	★★	St. Louis, MO	Riverview Gardens
Rivals.com's No. 22 overall prospect in Missouri. ... First-team All-State defensive back. ... Passed for 1,577 yards and rushed for 1,087 yards as a senior. ... Accounted for 33 total touchdowns.					
WILSON, Johnathan	WR	6-3, 185	★★	Houston, TX	Klein Forest
Honorable mention All-State. ... Caught 34 passes for 784 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior.					

JAYHAWKS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
90	RICHARD ALSPAUGH	DE	6-3	225	Jr	Overland Park
56	KAYL ANDERSON	LS	6-2	225	So	Tulsa, OK
75	MARCUS ANDERSON	OL	6-4	285	Sr	Oakland, CA
67	RAMESES ARCEO	OL	6-4	295	Jr	Whittier, CA
28	SAM ARCHER	FB	6-1	220	So	McPherson
36	TANG BACHEYIE	S	6-1	205	Jr	Windsor, Ontario
34	DONTE BEAN	RB	5-9	180	Fr	Rowlett, TX
94	CALEB BLAKESLEY	DL	6-5	285	So	Ottawa
47	MATT BOUWIE	WR	5-10	175	Fr	Wichita
43	JACOB BRANSTETTER	K	5-10	175	Fr	Lawton, OK
81	RUSSELL BRORSEN	DE	6-4	238	Jr	Stillwater, OK
37	MICAH BROWN	WR	6-0	178	So	Kearney, NE
38	RAYMOND BROWN	WR	6-3	200	Jr	St. Louis, MO
50	RYAN CANTRELL	OL	6-3	285	Jr	Sugar Land, TX
59	SAL CAPRA	OL	6-3	245	Fr	Kansas City, MO
28	CHRIS CLAWSON	S	5-10	180	Fr	Montgomery, TX
78	ANTHONY COLLINS	OL	6-6	300	Jr	Beaumont, TX
22	KYLE DAVIS	P	5-10	178	So	Overland Park
70	MATT DARTON	OL	6-6	305	Jr	San Diego, CA
87	BRADLEY DEDEAUX	TE	6-3	250	Fr	Midwest City, OK
49	DREW DUDLEY	LB	6-2	212	Fr	College Station, TX
16	BRANDON DUNCAN	LB	6-1	210	So	Garland, TX
88	DEXTON FIELDS	WR	6-0	200	Jr	Dallas, TX
85	DEREK FINE	TE	6-3	245	Sr	Sallisaw, OK
82	JEFF FOSTER	WR	6-2	195	Sr	Cedar Rapids, IA
4	GARY GREEN	RB	5-9	175	Jr	San Antonio, TX
99	JAMAL GREENE	DE	6-4	265	Fr	Kansas City
61	IAN HANDSHY	LB	6-1	235	So	Lawrence
24	KENDRICK HARPER	DB	5-10	187	Jr	Hartwell, GA
79	CHET HARTLEY	OL	6-4	310	Jr	Kingman
72	TODD HASELHORST	DL	6-4	300	Jr	Olathe
86	MARCUS HENRY	WR	6-4	200	Sr	Lawton, OK
13	MARCUS HERFORD	WR	6-3	210	Jr	DeSoto, TX
12	JAMES HOLT	LB	6-3	200	Jr	Altus, OK
89	TERTAVIAN INGRAM	WR	6-0	185	Fr	Tampa, FL
33	DEVIN JACKSON	FB	5-9	225	Jr	Lenexa
83	MARC JONES	TE	6-4	241	Sr	Norfolk, VA
87	JOHN LARSON	DE	6-3	245	Jr	Shawnee Mission
17	TYLER LAWRENCE	QB	6-3	205	Fr	Shawnee
51	DAKOTA LEWIS	LB	6-1	206	Fr	Sulphur, OK
55	JOHN MARSHALL	OL	6-3	280	Fr	New Pleasant, TX
95	MATTHEW MATTE	TE	6-2	230	So	Albuquerque, NM
66	ADRIAN MAYES	OL	6-3	300	Jr	Manhattan
35	BRANDON MCANDERSON	RB	6-0	235	Sr	Lawrence
93	JAMES MCCLINTON	DL	6-1	283	Sr	Garland, TX
10	KERRY MEIER	QB	6-3	215	So	Pittsburg
8	JOE MORTENSEN	LB	6-1	245	Jr	Concord, CA
27	SADIQ MUHAMMED	S	6-0	195	Sr	Kansas City, MO
52	JAMAL MURRAY	LB	5-10	220	Fr	Wichita
44	OLAITAN OGUNTODU	LB	6-0	200	So	Mesquite, TX
47	MAXWELL ONYEGBULE	LB	6-4	230	Fr	Arlington, TX
9	RAIMOND PENDLETON	WR	5-10	180	So	Garland, TX
73	JUSTIN PESSETTO	OL	6-3	285	Fr	Shawnee
19	REECE PETTY	WR	6-1	185	Fr	Liberal
22	ANGUS QUIGLEY	RB	6-2	210	So	Cleburne, TX
18	XAVIER RAMBO	WR	6-0	185	Fr	Dallas, TX
45	STANLEY REDWINE	CB	5-10	175	Jr	Lawrence
5	TODD REESING	QB	5-11	190	So	Austin, TX
7	PATRICK RESBY	S	6-2	195	Jr	Humble, TX
40	MIKE RIVERA	LB	6-3	250	Jr	Shawnee Mission
65	CESAR RODRIGUEZ	OL	6-7	286	Sr	La Puente, CA
60	JOSE RODRIGUEZ	OL	6-6	255	So	La Puente, CA
58	JAKE SCHERMER	LB	6-2	215	So	Nixa, MO
19	BRIAN SEYMOUR	S	6-1	190	Sr	Lawrence
1	JAKE SHARP	RB	5-10	190	So	Salina
62	ALEX SMITH	OL	6-0	275	Fr	Basehor
49	DEREK SPEARS	TE	6-3	215	Jr	Osborne
26	PHILLIP STROZIER	DB	6-0	190	Fr	Kansas City, MO
25	DARRELL STUCKEY	S	6-1	202	So	Kansas City
3	AQIB TALIB	CB	6-2	180	Jr	Richardson, TX
71	LUKE TEMPLIN	DL	6-2	240	So	Andover
95	JASON THOMPSON	DE	6-6	245	So	Dallas, TX
46	JUSTIN THORNTON	S	6-1	195	So	St. Joseph, MO
15	KYLE TUCKER	P	6-2	205	Sr	Katy, TX
20	ANTHONY WEBB	DB	6-0	180	So	Glenn Heights, TX
39	SCOTT WEBB	K	5-11	180	Sr	Tulsa, OK
84	JEFF WHEELER	DE	6-7	260	So	Houston, TX
68	CARL WILSON	OL	6-4	275	Fr	Redlands, CA
63	IAN WOLFE	OL	6-5	280	Fr	Fort Collins, CO
41	ARIST WRIGHT	LB	6-0	210	So	Houston, TX
53	MATT ZELEZNAK	LB	6-0	215	Jr	Topeka

NOTEBOOK

The Jayhawks will have three new faces among their coaching staff, though only one lacked any direct tie to Kansas before being hired.

Ed Warinner is the new offensive coordinator after serving as offensive line coach at Illinois for the past two years. Prior to his stint in Champaign, Warinner spent two seasons as offensive line coach at Kansas, where he was popular among his players. Warinner replaces veteran Nick Quartaro, who left coaching.

Another familiar face, **Je'Ney Jackson**, signed on to be cornerbacks coach. A decorated player at Wyoming in the mid '90s, Jackson worked as a strength coach for the Jayhawks the past two years.

Steve Tovar is the new linebackers coach after most recently serving as an assistant for the Miami Dolphins. Even he has a tie, though not so obvious — he was an All-American at Ohio State and played under assistant coach **Bill Young**. Young is now KU's defensive coordinator.

• Running back **Angus Quigley** slowly worked his way back into the mix during the spring after suffering a devastating injury during preseason camp last summer.

Quigley suffered from a severely torn muscle in his thigh, and was forced to have surgery last September. That ended his redshirt freshman season before it even began. Despite months of grueling rehabilitation, Quigley still wasn't 100 percent for spring practices, though he's shooting to be by August.

• Construction on the $31 million Anderson Family Football Complex — being built adjacent to Memorial Stadium — is underway. The two-story building will feature offices, locker rooms, a weight room, training rooms and many other amenities, and will help the Jayhawks catch up with other Big 12 facilities in the facilities arms race.

Along with the building, two football practice fields will be developed next to Memorial Stadium, making the area in the middle of the campus the centralized home of Kansas football.

• Kansas and Missouri agreed to move the Border War rivalry game to Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo., for the next two seasons. The move was controversial, but financially beneficial — each school will get a $1 million payout by the Kansas City Chiefs for each of the games.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
K. Meier	8	123.43	104	184	10	56.5	1193	13	50	149.1
A. Barmann	7	104.28	82	150	6	54.7	911	3	46	130.1

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
J. Cornish	12	250	1530	73	1457	5.8	8	69	121.4
K.Meier	8	99	447	101	346	3.5	5	31	43.2
J. Sharp	12	21	131	2	129	6.1	0	27	10.8

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
D. Fields	12	45	455	10.1	5	31	37.9
B. Murph	12	43	467	10.9	3	50	38.9
D. Fine	12	28	355	12.7	5	40	29.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: M. Rivera 90, J. Kemp 82, J. Mortensen 82
Interceptions: A. Talib 6, A. Webb 3, three with 1
Sacks: J. McClinton 6, P. Como 4.5, B. Brorsen 4

Results

(6-6, 2-6)

W	NORTHWESTERN STATE	49-18
W	UL-MONROE	21-19
L	at Toledo	2OT 31-37
W	SOUTH FLORIDA	13-7
L	at Nebraska	OT 32-39
L	TEXAS A&M	18-21
L	OKLAHOMA STATE	32-42
L	at Baylor	35-36
W	COLORADO	20-15
W	at Iowa State	41-10
W	KANSAS STATE	39-20
L	at Missouri	17-42

Photo by Albert Dickson/Sporting News

experience. All-Big 12 cornerback Aqib Talib could be an All-American by season's end, while defensive back Anthony Webb finished last season as a freshman starter.

Each of the four linebackers who had starting experience last year returns, and McClinton is an All-Big 12 candidate in the trenches.

It's a good foundation to build on, and now comes the building.

The Jayhawks spent the spring distancing themselves from the problems that plagued 2006. They were torn down and reconstructed — going back to basics in an attempt to rid themselves of a season-long problem a year ago.

"It's just a matter of getting fundamentally better," Mangino said.

"You always evolve and you're always going to work with some new things. But basically, we're working the stuff we've always worked that's been good to us over the years."

SPECIAL TEAMS

For the third consecutive year, the kicking game shouldn't be any sort of liability.

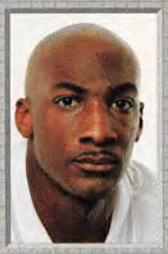
Despite the NCAA lowering the kickoff tee, Scott Webb actually booted more touchbacks in 2006 than he did the year before. It's a testament to his increasing leg strength, but it's not at the expense of his accuracy — he hit 13 of 18 field goal attempts and 37 of 39 extra points.

Punter Kyle Tucker had bouts of inconsistency last year, but the senior's strong leg is there once he brings it all together. A few ugly shanks in critical times stained his junior season, but he was a Ray Guy Award semifinalist as a sophomore for a reason.

The return specialists are the bigger wild card. Returning kicks could be Marcus Herford or Jake Sharp. Herford was great at finding holes and accelerating, but Sharp is more likely to shake a defender to pick up extra yards. Either could turn out to be a fine option.

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER



CB Aqib Talib

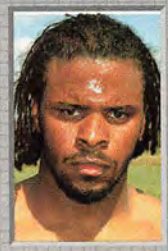
Without question KU's most versatile talent. Though he projects to make a nice living playing cornerback at the next level, Talib can do a lot more than that for the Jayhawks in 2007. ... He earned first-team All-Big 12 honors after leading the nation in passes defended (despite playing just 10 games), but his playmaking ability can carry over to offense. He lined up a few times at receiver and had a 45-yard touchdown reception in last year's finale, and also took practice repetitions returning punts. He figures to have at least a limited role on offense this season.

EMERGING STAR

OL Anthony Collins

Collins will be starting his second full season for the Jayhawks, and clearly will be the most talented piece of KU's offensive line. ... Collins projects to make the switch from right to left tackle to protect Kerry Meier's blindside, and could be a serious candidate for All-Big 12 honors if his development continues as expected. ... Collins has NFL potential — yet he remains KU's big secret for the time being.

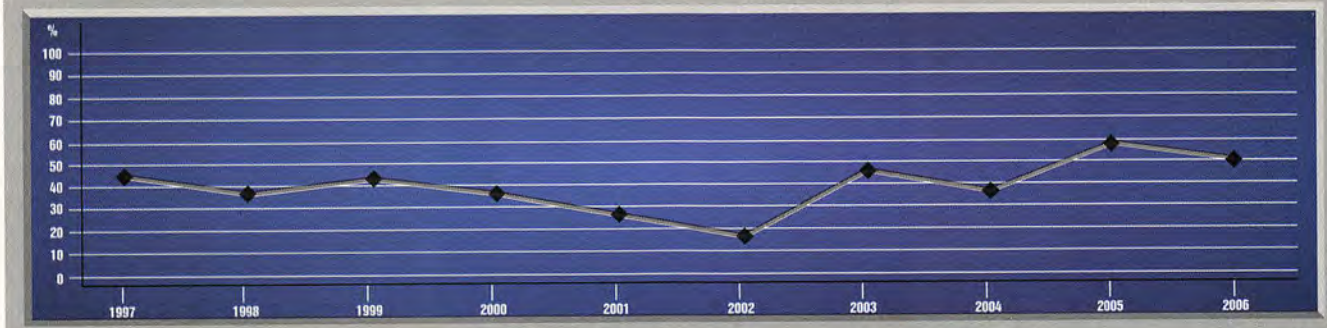
TOP NEWCOMER



CB Kendrick Harper

A physical corner out of Butler Community College in nearby El Dorado, Kan., Harper made an impact immediately when he showed up for spring drills. ... It was believed he'd be there to provide cornerback depth in 2007, his first season in Division I-A. It's expected to be a lot more than that, now.

Kansas' Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

PHOTO BY DENNIS HUBBARD

Look No Further For Leader on D

After three years of looking elsewhere, it's finally time.

Time for James McClinton to start looking at himself.

Kansas' thick defensive tackle recognizes that no team thrives without someone stepping up as the leader. So on a defense that could have just one senior starter — himself — McClinton is digging deep to bring more than just gap-plugging and pocket-disrupting to the Jayhawks' defense.

He needs to be the man his teammates turn to.

"I'm taking that role now. I'm the vet," McClinton said. "I've got to be the daddy, and I've got to lead these people."

McClinton is worthy of the role. He's deeply spiritual and a fine role model. He's well-liked among teammates. And he's a good football player — collecting 51 tackles and 14.5 tackles for loss his junior season, despite playing inside.

Those numbers earned him second-team All-Big 12 honors, and he's a strong candidate to be a first-teamer this year. But it won't be just because of work on game days.

"He pushes us a lot," safety Darrell Stuckey said.

"He celebrates whenever someone makes a play. It doesn't matter if he's on the field or not. It could be the second-string out there and he still will be running on the field cheering."

McClinton is banking on this year being his best, and any indication historically could prove him right. The Garland, Texas, native played sparingly as a true freshman, then was thrown into a starting role. He complemented All-Big 12 defensive end Charlton Keith as a sophomore, then emerged as KU's top lineman as a junior.

Defensive tackles at Kansas aren't asked to put up statistics, but rather fluster quarterbacks, set up defensive ends and shut down passing lanes. For McClinton to lead the Jayhawks in tackles for loss last year speaks volumes about his impact.

That's all good, but McClinton is shooting even higher for 2007. As he sees it, the team needs him to in the worst way.

"I want to be better. Why stay the same?" McClinton said. "This defensive line is young. Last year, we had leaders. We had people that could lead and were good players.

"They're gone. I'm taking their role now."

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Kansas has a nonconference schedule that should result in a 4-0 start. All four games are at home, and none of the opponents are from BCS conferences.

The season-opener against defending MAC champion Central Michigan should provide the toughest matchup until Oct. 6, when the Jayhawks travel to Kansas State.

The Big 12 slate, while not including Oklahoma and Texas for the second consecutive year, isn't as easy as the 2006 schedule, which Kansas navigated to just a 3-5 record. KU will have a tough three-game stretch between Oct. 27 and Nov. 10 — at Texas A&M, Nebraska at home and at Oklahoma State.

The regular-season finale against Missouri was moved from Lawrence to Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo., as part of a two-year agreement. Kansas will play just three Big 12 games in Lawrence this season, which can't help when every win is precious toward bowl aspirations.

— Ryan Wood

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 8	SOUTHEASTERN LOUISIANA
Sept. 15	TOLEDO
Sept. 22	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL
Oct. 6	at Kansas State
Oct. 13	BAYLOR
Oct. 20	at Colorado
Oct. 27	at Texas A&M
Nov. 3	NEBRASKA
Nov. 10	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 17	IOWA STATE
Nov. 24	(Kansas City) Missouri

GOLDEN HURRICANE

AT A GLANCE

2006

8-5 overall, 5-3 C-USA (3rd, West)

COACH

Todd Graham: At Tulsa: 1st year; overall: 7-6, 1 year

RETURNING STARTERS

11; 4 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Paul Smith, RB Courtney Tennial, LB Nelson Coleman, LB Chris Chamberlain, NG Terrel Nemons, DE Moton Hopkins, S Anthony Germany, S Steve Craver

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

QB Paul Smith should finish his career as Tulsa's all-time leading passer, and he could really flourish in the new offense. The veteran running backs can be successful in this system, too.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Tulsa lost an all-conference offensive lineman, and two more who earned second-team honors. The top receivers have departed. More talent drain includes LB Nick Bunting (the C-USA Defensive Player of the Year), DB Bobby Blackshire and DL Robert Latu.

KEY LOSSES

WR Idris Moss, LB Nick Bunting, DB Bobby Blackshire, OT Jeff Perrett, DE Robert Latu, CB Nick Graham, OG John Hameister-Ries, OL Aaron Dannenhauer

OVERVIEW

Graham last season guided Rice to its first bowl game in 45 years. He had a successful stint as defensive coordinator at Tulsa from 2002 through 2005, so there aren't many worries about that side of the ball. The big deal is the new spread offense. That adds a layer of intrigue in what should be the team's fourth bowl berth in the past five years.

New Coach, New Offense ... and Likely Another Bowl

OFFENSE

Paul Smith has helped lead Tulsa to the 2005 Conference USA title and a pair of bowl games, and now he will really go out in style.

The senior quarterback gets to settle into new coordinator Gus Malzahn's no-huddle spread offense. Malzahn wasn't able to open his playbook in his one season at Arkansas, but new Tulsa coach Todd Graham is completely on board in ways that the Hogs' Houston Nutt never was.

That's good news for Smith, who threw for 2,727 yards and 15 touchdowns last season and should see those numbers jump. There's just one nagging question. Who is going to be catching all those passes?

Most of Tulsa's experienced wideouts have departed. Junior Nick Henderson, who had three catches for 23 yards and one score, figures to be one starter.

Dion Toliver, who last year caught 35 passes for 480 yards and two touchdowns in junior college, earned a starting spot in the spring, when he showed he could make circus catches. Behind him is senior Cameron Clemons, who played in five games last year.

Courtney Tennial, who led Tulsa with 845 yards rushing and 14 scores on the ground, returns. He and fellow back Tarrion Adams, are accomplished receivers, giving Smith more options through the air. Adams had 31 receptions last season, ranking third on the team.

As for the line, guard Justin Morsey, who started the final 10 games last season, is the lone returning starter. New faces include Walter Boyd at left tackle, Roderick Thomas on the right, Curt Puckett at left guard and Jody Whaley at center.

DEFENSE

Tulsa returns two-thirds of its linebacking corps in its 3-3-5 defense, although the one loss is significant — Nick Bunting. Chris Chamberlain returns on the strong side with Nelson Coleman, the team's leading tackler in 2005 and 2006, back in the middle.

The top candidate for the weakside spot is Alain Karatepeyan, who made 39 stops last year as a reserve. Look for Tanner Antle, Mike Bryan and Donald Gobert to also see time.

Moton Hopkins (40 tackles) returns at one end spot, with sophomore Anthony Egbuniwe likely to emerge at the other. Returning nose guard Terrel Nemons (31 tackles) is also back.

Senior Steve Craver (31 tackles) steps into the bandit spot. At strong safety, Anthony Germany returns with Randy Duncan as the new free safety.

Roy Roberts started all 13 games at corner last year and had one interception. He is back with Charles Davis, who played in 12 games last year as a true freshman, the new starter on the other side.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jarod Tracy connected on 11 of 12 field goal attempts a year ago. He also will handle kickoff responsibilities. Paul Jurado, who averaged 40.5 yards per punt in limited action last season, is the new starter. Charles Davis is the top kick and punt returner heading into fall drills.

— Steve Hunt

WILDCATS

For more coverage of the Wildcats, visit www.kansasstate.rivals.com

AT A GLANCE

2006

7-6 overall, 4-4 Big 12 (T-2nd, North)

COACH

Ron Prince — At K-State and overall: 7-6, 1 year

RETURNING STARTERS

14; 7 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Josh Freeman, RB James Johnson, WR Jordy Nelson, WR Daniel Gonzalez, OLB Ian Campbell, SS Marcus Watts, ILB Reggie Walker, DE Rob Jackson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The Wildcats have a star quarterback to build around and talent at the skill positions. A move to more 3-4 fronts defensively could make Ian Campbell, Reggie Walker and Rob Jackson even better playmakers. Prince's system is now in place with 53 returning lettermen.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Will the offensive line hold up for talented QB Josh Freeman? Center Jordan Bedore is the unit's only certainty. Defensively, the unit is faster, but might not be any better against physical rushing attacks.

KEY LOSSES

WR Yamon Figurs, LB Brandon Archer, LB Zach Diles, PK Jeff Snodgrass

OVERVIEW

K-State looked like a team on the rise at times last season, but also like a team without direction. A new coaching staff and shaky line play on both sides can have that effect. While the bulk of the coaching staff returns, there are no assurances the line play will improve. K-State will likely be around the .500 mark all season, though contending in the weak Big 12 North is not out of the question.

Better Than Last Year's Surprise? Lay It on the Line

Ron Prince has a slogan for this season: "The Power of One."

After an individual-competition free-for-all in Prince's first season, he is trying to get the Wildcats to think as a unit.

"Last year, it was more of competing to see who was going to start," said quarterback Josh Freeman. "This year, it's more that everybody sees what role they are going to be playing. We can focus more."

Few teams had such a clearly defined goal last season. Kansas State had a new, young, unproven coach and a quarterback mess that included five candidates.

Even the most optimistic of Wildcat fans said that if their team could somehow get to a bowl game after compiling two consecutive losing records, the season would be a success.

That goal was met. Even though K-State had little chance to win a Texas Bowl matchup against a motivated Rutgers team that finished 11-2, the foundation was put in place.

Building on that formation is possible because of who will be taking the snaps.

Freeman's talent was too good to keep off the field last season after he graduated high school early to attend spring drills, and he quickly showed his polish by shattering most of the school's records for freshman quarterbacks. There is no question Freeman is the man, and redshirt freshman Carson Coffman is the only backup.

If K-State's offensive line, far too soft for long stretches last season, can keep Freeman healthy, the Wildcats have a chance to contend in the Big 12 North. After all, K-State's 4-4 conference record last season was good enough to tie for second in the division.

The Wildcats' defense is in similar shape. There is talent behind the line, including the potential to have one of the better safety combinations in the country — senior captain Marcus Watts and junior college All-American Gary Chandler.

But K-State's downfall last season was its strength up front. The Wildcats were undersized and lacked depth on the line despite the breakout season of All-Big 12 defensive end Ian Campbell.

That problem was glaring in five of K-State's six losses. In falling to Louisville, Missouri, Nebraska, Kansas and Rutgers, the Wildcats allowed 209.4 rushing yards a game.

Switching from a 4-3 front to more 3-4 schemes might better suit K-State's personnel, but stopping the run could still be a huge issue.

Still, Prince produced a bowl bid — as well as a victory over Texas.

"I'm no Bobby Bowden," Prince said. "It's my second year, and I've got a lot to learn still."

OFFENSE

When a 6-6 strong-armed quarterback breaks records as a true freshman, it's tough not to make him the focal point. Josh Freeman, who passed for 1,780 yards last season, is certainly that for Kansas State.

For the Wildcats to make progress,

Ian Campbell Photo by Icon SMI

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 115.2 ypg rushing (9th in Big 12/86th in NCAA), 200.1 ypg passing (8th/57th), 315.3 ypg total offense (10th/85th), 22.8 ppg (10th/69th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Josh Freeman*	So.	Now adds experience to all his physical tools.	Carson Coffman, Fr.
RB	James Johnson*	Sr.	Junior college transfer developing into total package.	Leon Patton, So.
WR	Jordy Nelson*	Jr.	Terrific athlete slowed by knee problems last year.	Ernie Pierce, Jr.
WR	Daniel Gonzalez	Sr.	Former walk-on had 15 catches last year.	Toney Coleman, Sr.
WR	Cedric Wilson	Jr.	One start, 15 catches last season.	Lamark Brown, Fr.
TE	Rashaad Norwood*	Sr.	Has yet to live up to lofty expectations.	Jeron Mastrud, So.
LT	Alesana Alesana	Jr.	Top-notch junior college recruit impressed this spring.	Gerard Spexarth, Jr.
LG	Caleb Handy*	Jr.	As wide and strong as a brick wall.	Brad Rooker, Jr.
C	Jordan Bedore*	Jr.	Former prep wrestling star leads unit.	Brad Rooker, Jr.
RG	Logan Robinson	Sr.	Behemoth at 6-8; a former grayshirt project.	Brock Unruh, So.
RT	Nick Stringer*	So.	Freshman All-Big 12 selection.	Derek Meyer, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 148.8 ypg rushing (9th in Big 12/78th NCAA), 197.0 passing (5th/53rd), 345.8 total defense (8th/70th), 23.8 ppg (7th/66th)

aPOS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Rob Jackson*	Sr.	Junior college transfer improved during season; 8.5 TFLs.	Brandon Balkcom, Jr.
DT	Alphonso Moran	Jr.	Inconsistent performer with 12 career starts.	Steven Cline, Sr.
DE	Moses Manu	Sr.	Limited experience, but a spring surprise.	Gabriel Crews, Fr.
LB	Ian Campbell*	Jr.	As defensive end, led Big 12 with 17.5 TFLs last season.	Ross Diehl, So.
LB	Justin Roland	Sr.	Hard hitter moved up depth charts late last year.	Marcus Perry, Sr.
LB	Reggie Walker*	Jr.	Physical presence could become team leader.	John Houlik, So.
LB	Eric Childs	So.	Needs to make teams pay for focusing on Campbell.	Greg Gaskins, Sr.
CB	Joshua Moore*	So.	One of Big 12's top freshman corners last year.	Bryan Baldwin, Sr.
CB	Justin McKinney*	Sr.	Short but fast; splits duties with Baldwin, Garvin.	Byron Garvin, Sr.
SS	Marcus Watts*	Sr.	Emotional, physical playmaker healthy again.	Andrew Erker, Jr.
FS	Gary Chandler	Jr.	Junior college All-American could star right away.	Courtney Herndon, So.

*Returning starter

though, they will have to develop a potent running game.

Senior James Johnson, third in the pecking order last season, emerged from spring camp as the starter. A junior college transfer, Johnson became more comfortable as the season wore on. This spring, he looked like a new version of himself — stronger, faster and more assertive.

Freeman was not the only freshman to have big games from the backfield. Leon Patton ran for a team-high 609 yards, a school freshman record. Where Johnson can explode through a hole, Patton's quickness allows him to create gaps. If that combination is effective behind a still-developing line, K-State will be in great shape.

Freeman has receiving weapons. Senior tight end Rashaad Norwood has all the tools to be a major part of the offense. At wide receiver, senior Jordy Nelson averaged 14 yards per catch despite being slowed by an injured knee. Now healthy, he could return to his 2005 form of 669 yards and eight touchdowns.

K-State's offensive fate could be defined by the line. The unit is led by junior center Jordan Bedore, who looked polished this spring. At right tackle, sophomore Nick Stringer got a lot of experience last season. If that pays off, he could be solid.

The Wildcats knew they needed recruiting help on the line, and junior college transfer Alesana Alesana was a target. He participated in spring drills and could be the starter at left tackle. The guard spots are manned by junior Caleb Handy and senior Logan Robinson, massively strong guys from small Kansas towns.

DEFENSE

While going through Prince's first season as coach has eased the transition in most areas, the defense is right back to square one.

Coordinator Raheem Morris returned to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, so Prince promoted special teams coach Tim Tibesar while the two decided on a philosophy shift, as well.

K-State will use multiple fronts like last season, but a 3-4 replaces the traditional 4-3 as the dominant look.

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Lamark Brown, WR
A physically imposing prospect, the 6-3, 215-pound Lamark Brown is one of the nation's most ready-to-go prospects. Brown, who sports a body like a linebacker, will be a receiver at K-State. With his body, size and speed, he should be an instant mismatch for any defensive back in the Big 12 at an early stage of his career.

Gary Chandler, DB
While he's not a freshman, few will have a bigger impact on the K-State defense next season than junior college transfer Gary Chandler. The four-star prospect is one of the top five junior college players in America, and his two-time all-Jayhawk Conference honors speak for themselves.

Chris Patterson, LB
Patterson is another junior college player that was formerly ranked as a five-star player out of high school. He is expected to see the field right away at outside linebacker. He's one of the top pure athletes in the nation — both on the high school and junior college ranks — and his journey to K-State included signing twice previously with Oklahoma.

THE SLEEPER

Brandon Walls, LB
Though maybe a little undersized at the linebacker position, Brandon Walls has all the tools to be a great player at Kansas State. The 6-0, 205-pounder was one of the fastest player in the Dallas Metroplex, and his coach says he's one of the fastest defensive players he has coached. He'll be one to watch despite just being a three-star prospect and could exceed expectations.

Committments	32
Average Stars	2.62
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	3
★★★☆☆	14
★★☆☆☆	15
Total Stars	84
National Rank: 41	Big 12: 8

2008 NEEDS

It's time for K-State to go out and sign another high profile quarterback to back up Josh Freeman and eventually take over the reins. More depth is needed at defensive tackle and K-State still must do everything it can to add more high quality players at receiver and offensive line.

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
ABANA, Mike	DT	6-6, 290	★★★	Santa Monica, CA	Santa Monica CC
First-team All-Conference. ... Had 33 tackles, seven tackles for a loss and three sacks as a sophomore at Santa Monica.					
ADAMS, Corey	OL	6-4, 235	★★	Monument, CO	Lewis-Palmer
Second-team All-Conference. ... Special team standout. ... Long snapper.					
ALESANA, Alesana	OL	6-6, 318	★★★	San Francisco	City College of San Francisco
Rivals.com's No. 71 overall junior college prospect. ... First-team All-State.					
AUFNER, Clyde	OL	6-7, 260	★★★	Peculiar, MO	Raymore-Peculiar
Rivals.com's No. 15 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 51 offensive tackle nationally.					
BELL, Demetrius	RB	5-8, 158	★★	Olathe, KS	Olathe
Rivals.com's No. 13 overall prospect in Kansas. ... Rushed for 3,731 career yards and 45 touchdowns.					
BROWN, Lamark	ATH	6-3, 215	★★★★	St. Louis, MO	Hazelwood West
Rivals.com's No. 71 prospect nationally. ... No. 4 athlete nationally. ... No. 3 prospect in Missouri.					
CHANDLER, Gary	DB	5-11, 186	★★★★	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville CC
Rivals.com's No. 5 overall junior college prospect. ... First-team junior college All-American.					
CHERRY, Josh	K	6-1, 170	★★	McCook, NE	McCook
Rivals.com's No. 5 overall prospect in Nebraska. ... No. 12 kicker nationally. ... Averaged 41.6 yards per punt.					
EVANS, Richard	ATH	5-10, 175	★★	Dallas, TX	Pinkston
Rushed for 945 yards and nine touchdowns as a senior. ... Intercepted three passes.					
FREEZE, Colten	OL	6-6, 270	★★	Liberty, MO	Liberty
Rivals.com's No. 25 overall prospect in Missouri.					
GUIDRY, Raphael	DE	6-4, 245	★★	La Marque, TX	La Marque
First-team All-District. ... Had 86 tackles, five sacks and forced five fumbles as a senior.					
HARRIS, Brian	LB	6-4, 220	★★	East St. Louis, IL	East St. Louis
Had 80 tackles as a senior. ... Also had 249 receiving yards.					
HARTMAN, Tysyn	ATH	6-2, 190	★★★	Wichita, KS	Kapaun Mt. Carmel
Rivals.com's No. 6 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 65 athlete nationally. ... Three-year starter at quarterback and defensive back.					
HAYNES, Reggie	DB	6-1, 170	★★	Apopka, FL	Apopka
Played on district championship team. ... Had 30 tackles and two interceptions as a junior.					
HOGAN, Danny	WR	6-2, 190	★★	Dallas, TX	Roosevelt
First-team All-State. ... District Offensive Player of the Year. ... Averaged 21 yards per catch.					
KIRK, Payton	DE	6-5, 250	★★	Liberty, MO	Liberty
Rivals.com's No. 27 overall prospect in Missouri. ... Second-team All-State.					
LIU, Ben	OL	6-6, 325	★★★	Sacramento, CA	Sacramento City College
First-team All-Conference at Sacramento. ... Started two seasons at Sacramento.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
MACK, Jeremy	TE	6-4, 210	★★	Blue Springs, MO	South
Rivals.com's No. 31 overall prospect in Missouri. ... Caught 27 passes for 448 yards and 10 touchdowns as a senior.					
MATTHEW, Kendrick	DB	5-11, 180	★★	Missouri City, TX	Fort Bend Marshall
Second-team All-District. ... Played on state co-championship team. ... Lettered in track.					
McDANIEL, Jerrell	WR	6-1, 185	★★★	East St. Louis, IL	East St. Louis
Rivals.com's No. 25 overall prospect in Illinois. ... Caught 36 passes for 913 yards and 20 touchdowns as a senior.					
MURPHY, Deon	ATH	5-10, 165	★★★	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville CC
Rivals.com's No. 67 overall junior college prospect. ... All-conference receiver and return specialist.					
PATTERSON, Chris	LB	6-3, 215	★★★★	Joliet, IL	Joliet JC
Rivals.com's No. 34 overall junior college prospect. ... Had tthree interceptions and two sacks at Joliet.					
PIERCE, Ernie	WR	6-4, 215	★★★	Santa Barbara, CA	Santa Barbara CC
Rivals.com's No. 80 overall junior college prospect. ... Had 620 receiving yards and four touchdowns last season.					
PINCHBACK, Dante	TE	6-5, 255	★★★	Irving, TX	Irving
Rivals.com's No. 82 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 35 tight end nationally. ... Second-team All-District.					
REED, Jeremy	RB	5-11, 205	★★★	Great Bend, KS	Great Bend
Rivals.com's No. 5 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 33 running back nationally. ... Rushed for 1,654 and 29 touchdowns as a senior.					
ROEPKE, Jake	OL	6-7, 298	★★	Hoyt, KS	Royal Valley
Rivals.com's No. 20 overall prospect in Kansas. ... All-Conference honorable mention.					
ROHLEDER, Kevin	LB	6-1, 205	★★★	Wichita, KS	Bishop Carroll
Rivals.com's No. 9 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 54 outside linebacker nationally. ... Had 105 tackles, 30 tackles for a loss and four interceptions as a senior.					
SIMS, Eldridge	OL	6-6, 288	★★★	Compton, CA	Compton College
Rivals.com's No. 93 overall junior college prospect. ... Played tight end and offensive tackle at Compton.					
STEWART, Xzavier	DT	6-1, 260	★★	Chicago, IL	Morgan Park
Had 110 tackles and 11 sacks on team that reached Class 7A state semifinals.					
TIGNER, Dahmaz	DB	6-3, 210	★★	Pompano Beach, FL	Ely
Had 110 tackles, 11 tackles for a loss and five interceptions as a senior.					
WALLS, Brandon	LB	6-0, 205	★★★	Irving, TX	Irving
Rivals.com's No. 70 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 47 outside linebacker nationally. ... Second-team All-District.					
WOODS, Justin	DB	5-10, 180	★★★	Shawnee, KS	Mill Valley
Rivals.com's No. 7 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 45 cornerback nationally. ... Rushed for 1,344 yards and 15 touchdowns as a senior.					

WILDCATS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
78	ALESANA ALESANA	OL	6-4	286	Jr	Malie, W. Samoa
35	HEATH ALEXANDER	DB	5-11	190	Jr	Satanta
80	BRETT ALSTATT	TE	6-4	224	Jr	Hays
3	BRYAN BALDWIN	DB	5-10	192	Sr	St. Louis, MO
92	BRANDON BALKCOM	DT	6-0	278	Jr	Hazel Crest, IL
58	CHRIS BAMBERGER	LB	6-1	222	Jr	Jetmore
79	JORDAN BEDORE	OL	6-3	297	Jr	Goodland
31	BRICE BERNBECK	DB	5-11	181	So	Lakin
21	COLE BROKENICKY	P	5-11	195	Sr	Manhattan
98	IAN CAMPBELL	DE	6-5	242	Jr	Cimarron
30	CHRIS CARNEY	DB	6-1	185	So	Denver, CO
21	GARY CHANDLER	DB	5-11	195	Jr	Wichita
23	RAY CHEATHAM	DB	6-0	185	Jr	El Dorado, AR
90	ERIC CHILDS	DE	6-3	230	So	Arlington, TX
99	STEVEN CLINE	DT	6-2	278	Sr	Palm Beach Gdns, FL
14	CARSON COFFMAN	QB	6-3	200	Fr	Peculiar, MO
25	TONEY COLEMAN	WR	6-1	209	Sr	Arlington, TX
91	CLAYTON COX	DE	6-3	238	Sr	Weskan
93	GABRIEL CREWS	DT	6-2	302	Fr	Jonesboro, GA
42	ROSS DIEHL	LB	6-2	215	So	Castle Rock, CO
36	ANDREW ERKER	DB	6-1	187	Jr	Olathe
25	SCOTT EVANS	DB	5-11	199	So	Andover
55	VLAD FAUSTIN	DT	6-2	250	Jr	Miami, FL
1	JOSH FREEMAN	QB	6-6	255	So	Kansas City, MO
14	D.J. FULHAGE	P	5-9	180	Fr	Beloit
47	GABE GANTZ	TE	6-6	238	Fr	Perry
6	BYRON GARVIN	DB	5-9	188	Sr	Miramar, FL
33	GREG GASKINS	LB	6-0	215	Sr	Manhattan
83	DANIEL GONZALEZ	WR	6-4	219	Sr	Augusta
69	CALEB HANDY	OL	6-1	307	Jr	Conway Springs
24	STEPHEN HARRISON	WR	5-11	178	Fr	Dallas, TX
20	COURTNEY HERNDON	DB	5-11	206	So	Dallas, TX
15	KEVIN HOLLIS	DB	5-11	205	So	Gilmer, TX
39	JOHN HOULIK	LB	5-11	215	So	Wichita
95	ROB JACKSON	DE	6-4	253	Sr	West Haven, CT
22	JEREMY JAMES	RB	5-7	177	So	Kansas City, MO
8	JAMES JOHNSON	RB	5-11	200	Sr	Port Arthur, TX
29	OTIS JOHNSON	DB	5-10	171	So	Houston, TX
59	ZACH KENDALL	DT	6-3	285	Fr	Peculiar, MO
60	SEAN KOLICH	LS	6-1	221	Fr	Olathe
40	TANER LITTON	LB	6-0	213	So	Beloit
61	ZACH LUCAS	OL	6-3	262	Jr	Sublette
96	MOSES MANU	DE	6-2	260	Sr	Inglewood, CA
85	JERON MASTRUD	TE	6-6	250	So	Beaverton, OR
41	STEVE MATHIAS	LB	6-0	220	Sr	Partridge
67	KENNETH MAYFIELD	OL	6-4	311	Fr	Randallstown, MD
28	JOHN McCARDLE	RB	5-8	190	Jr	Omaha, NE
44	DAVYON McGHEE	LB	5-10	225	Fr	Houston, TX
22	JUSTIN McKINNEY	DB	5-9	191	Sr	Sanford, FL
71	DEREK MEYER	OL	6-6	310	So	Campbell, NE
43	ANTWON MOORE	DB	5-10	210	Jr	Ponca City, OK
4	JOSHUA MOORE	DB	5-11	187	So	Pompano Beach, FL
50	ALPHONSO MORAN	DT	6-0	296	Jr	Delray Beach, FL
27	JORDY NELSON	WR	6-3	217	Sr	Riley
89	RASHAAD NORWOOD	TE	6-3	234	Sr	Kansas City
18	JARED PARKER	K	5-11	198	Jr	Ankeny, IA
9	LEON PATTON	RB	5-7	187	So	Dallas, TX
37	MARCUS PERRY	LB	6-2	223	Sr	Leawood
26	TERRY PETRIE	RB	5-8	185	Sr	Norton
82	MICHAEL POOSCHKE	TE	6-2	240	Sr	Lawton, OK
31	TONY PURVIS	WR	5-11	167	So	McCook, NE
46	JACK REED	TE	6-0	208	So	Glouchester, MA
17	TIM REYER	P	5-11	201	Sr	Wamgeo
65	LOGAN ROBINSON	OL	6-8	315	Sr	Agra
51	JUSTIN ROLAND	LB	6-0	245	Sr	Ponca City, OK
68	BRAD ROOKER	OL	6-6	288	Jr	Omaha, NE
57	MACKENZIE ROSEL	LB	6-1	215	So	Liberal
16	BROOKS ROSSMAN	PK	6-0	178	Jr	San Diego, CA
18	COREY SCHULTZ	WR	6-3	180	Jr	Quenemo
26	TIM SCHWERDT	K	5-8	178	Sr	Tecumseh
5	CALEB SMITH	QB	6-2	218	Jr	Garden City
73	GERARD SPEXARTH	OL	6-6	285	Jr	Colwich
64	NICK STRINGER	OL	6-6	265	So	Topeka
13	ADRIAN STRYKER	DB	6-1	197	So	Valley Heights
76	BROCK UNRUH	OL	6-5	295	So	Corpus Christi, TX
54	TREVOR VIERS	OL	6-5	265	So	Windom
53	REGGIE WALKER	LB	6-1	231	Jr	Sacramento, CA
54	CORY WARREN	LB	6-0	210	Fr	Uniontown
2	MARCUS WATTS	DB	6-1	189	Sr	Hays
88	CEDRIC WILSON	WR	6-1	190	Jr	Fort Pierce, FL
17	MATT WYKES	WR	6-2	212	Jr	Conway Springs
48	PETE YEMM	DE	6-2	245	Jr	Overland Park

NOTEBOOK

Coaches often speak of getting back to basics, but **Ron Prince** was taking that to heart during the spring. He spent hours trying to figure out how to get the Wildcats to do one specific thing better: tackle.

"I felt that, in some of the most critical moments last year, we did not tackle very well," Prince said.

"It has been one of the things that we have been focusing on during the offseason as coaches. Not only from the mechanics of tackling, but having a plan based on your position and where you might find the runner."

• If anyone should be concerned about K-State changing its defensive scheme, it would be **Ian Campbell**. Not only is he being shifted from defensive end to outside linebacker, he's doing so after being an All-Big 12 selection who tied the school record for sacks.

"I'll be doing some different things," Campbell said. "If I don't get as many sacks as I did last year, I won't be horribly disappointed because I have a feeling somebody else will do some great things for us up there."

• Part of the reason for K-State's problems stopping the run last season, defensive end **Rob Jackson** said, was that the linemen thought they had to make the play or else the runner might be gone. This season, Jackson admitted, "I feel like I have more support behind me."

• Senior offensive lineman **Logan Robinson** said his unit understands the pressure. Robinson knows fans and coaches are looking at the line as the potential problem.

"We're getting the camaraderie and chemistry," he said. "As far as everything else, personally, I think we're miles ahead of where we were last year at this time."

• Junior linebacker **Reggie Walker** has been more excited for the season ever since it was announced earlier this year that K-State would open at Auburn.

"When I first heard that we were playing them, it was like a light went off in my head," he said. "I wanted to play somebody from the SEC. I've always wanted to do that."

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
J. Freeman	11	103.45	140	270	15	51.9	1780	6	74	161.8
D. Meier	12	98.58	72	141	4	51.1	775	3	44	64.6

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
L. Patton	12	108	640	31	609	5.6	6	44	50.8
J. Johnson	10	98	428	25	403	4.1	2	37	40.3
T. Clayton	5	67	338	16	322	4.8	3	69	64.4

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
J. Nelson	13	39	547	14.0	1	74	42.1
R. Norwood	12	36	358	9.9	0	28	29.8
Y. Figurs	12	28	418	14.9	3	68	34.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: B. Archer 106, Z. Diles 99, I. Campbell 67
Interceptions: M. Watts 3, B. Garvin 2, five with 1
Sacks: I. Campbell 11.5, R. Jackson 4.5, Z. Diles 3.5
Tackles for loss: I. Campbell 17.5, R. Jackson 8, Z. Diles 7.5

Results

(7-6, 4-4)

W	ILLINOIS STATE	24-23
W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	45-0
W	MARSHALL	23-7
L	LOUISVILLE	6-24
L	at Baylor	3-17
W	OKLAHOMA STATE	31-27
L	NEBRASKA	3-21
L	at Missouri	21-41
W	IOWA STATE	31-10
W	at Colorado	34-21
W	TEXAS	45-42
L	at Kansas	20-39
	Texas Bowl	
L	vs. Rutgers	10-37

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

The change makes sense considering that 230-pounders Ian Campbell and Eric Childs were forced to play end last season. Each has the body of a pass-rushing outside linebacker.

It will be tough for Campbell's numbers to get better, though. His 11.5 sacks tied the school record, and his 17.5 tackles for loss led the Big 12.

Rob Jackson can make plays at end, while senior Moses Manu has shown improvement. The question will be finding interior linemen strong enough to even maintain their position. Junior Alphonso Moran could provide that.

At linebacker, junior Reggie Walker has been a solid contributor, but now needs to become a star while physically roaming the middle, something he's capable of doing. Senior Justin Roland was perhaps the spring's most pleasant surprise, taking to his new assignments and delivering Walker-like hard hits.

K-State is in good shape in the secondary. Strong safety Marcus Watts, the emotional leader, seems to find the ball on almost every play. Combined with Gary Chandler, a junior college All-American, the Wildcats have physical hitters who are fast and shifty enough to have been offensive stars in the past.

While no cornerback stood out last season, the pool of sophomore Joshua Moore and seniors Justin McKinney, Bryan Baldwin and Byron Garvin provides depth and experience. None is taller than 5-11, though.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The unit's star last season, Yamon Figurs, was a dangerous returner and a terrific gunner on kick coverage.

He is gone, so Marcus Watts and John McCardle need to have the ability for quick tackles and playmaking on coverage, a big asset to K-State last season. Marcus Perry is also a special teams standout. Tailback Leon Patton might inherit the return duties.

The Wildcats lost their top two place-

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

OLB Ian Campbell

Campbell appeared in 10 games in 2005, making seven tackles. That's not bad for a freshman walk-on from Cimarron, Kan., a town of about 1,600 people. That makes what he did last season amazing. Campbell had a school-record 11.5 sacks and Big 12-leading 17.5 tackles for loss as an undersized defensive end. ... At 6-5, 232 pounds, Campbell is quick and relentless, which enabled him to have at least one sack in nine of 13 games and earn All-Big 12 honors. ... He had two sacks against Louisville, and two fumble recoveries against Texas.

EMERGING STAR

LB Reggie Walker

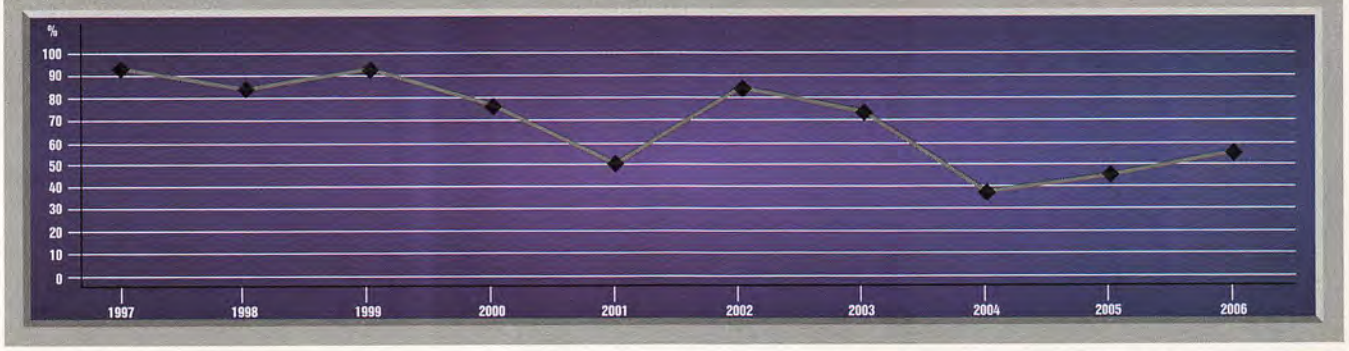
The linebacking unit needs a star and a leader, and Walker could be it. Known for his cocky nature from the day he stepped on campus, Walker played in nine games as a freshman. That included a breakout performance against Nebraska, where he had five tackles and a safety. ... Last season, he started nine games and had 36 tackles, modest numbers held down by the presence of seniors Brandon Archer and Zach Diles. ... With those two departed, Walker could be in for a season of much improved numbers and even more bravado.

TOP NEWCOMER

FS Gary Chandler

Chandler was a top in-state signing for Bill Snyder in 2005, coming from a prominent high school program at Wichita Heights. But Chandler did not qualify academically. So he went to Coffeyville Community College in Kansas, a national power, and starred for two seasons. ... A star running back in high school, Chandler possesses speed and acceleration with the change-of-direction of a tailback. Yet he is also a sure and powerful hitter. ... Recruited by schools in every major conference, he decided on K-State again.

Kansas State's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

JOSH FREEMAN

PHOTO BY DENNIS HUBBARD

Big QB ... Even Bigger Potential

During spring camp, Kansas State coach Ron Prince had quite the observation.

"I hear people talk about this JaMarcus Russell from LSU and how big he is," Prince said. "If JaMarcus Russell and Josh Freeman stood next to each other right now, they'd look very similar."

There are two parts of that statement that could ring worrisome to K-State opponents. First, Prince is right. Russell is 6-6, 260. Freeman, the Wildcats' sophomore quarterback, has added 17 pounds since last season to reach 255.

Second, while Freeman might not be ready for the NFL, he did prove he is more than a big guy playing quarterback. Freeman delivered the school's first bowl bid in three seasons while breaking the school's freshman passing record with 1,780 yards. In Big 12 games, he averaged 204.1 yards to rank sixth.

His progress was impossible to ignore. In the last four games of the regular season — which included a 45-42 upset of No. 4 Texas — Freeman was 78 of 121 (64.5 percent) for 925 yards and six touchdowns.

It was the most productive four-game stretch for a K-State quarterback in nearly a decade.

Remember, Freeman was a true freshman who had to escape a four-player position battle and work behind a shaky offensive line.

"Last year, at the beginning, I didn't get too many reps," Freeman said. "This year, I'm getting a lot more. This year, I'm looking to have more time to take the offense to a different level."

While the offensive line's improvement might determine how much he can do, Freeman is the kind of piece to build a program around.

At Colorado, in a victory to clinch bowl eligibility, Freeman was 22 of 26 for 251 yards and two touchdowns. Two of the incompletions were drops, and another was to stop the clock.

Against Texas, Freeman threw for 269 yards and three touchdowns with only one interception.

They are performances that make him a team leader, something he desires even at age 19.

"It's my team," he said. "That's how I want it."

So does Prince. He quickly endeared himself to K-State fans after his hire by talking Freeman out of his commitment to Nebraska. While simply one-upping the Cornhuskers was good enough then, Wildcat fans are dreaming of their big quarterback taking the team to big goals.

"Josh has been a good leader, really focused," Prince said. "He's going to be a sophomore, but he's excited to play like a senior."

kickers, leaving Brooks Rossman and Tim Schwerdt in a head-to-head competition. The winner will still be a question mark.

Punter Tim Reyer is not. A three-year starter, he averaged 42.1 yards last season to rank in the top 30 nationally. In Big 12 games, he increased that average to 43.8.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

For the first time since 1984, Kansas State plays six true road games. The Wildcats have long been criticized for playing cupcakes, but not this season.

The Wildcats start and end the regular season with nationally televised road contests, opening at Auburn and closing at Fresno State. It's a sign of things to come. Ron Prince has future games with Louisville, UCLA, Miami, Oregon and Virginia Tech.

The Big 12 schedule also gets off to a challenging start — at Texas, which will be looking for revenge. That likely makes the ensuing games, home dates against Kansas and Colorado, must-win situations if K-State wants to challenge in the Big 12 North. The Wildcats face division favorite Nebraska in Lincoln on Nov. 10.

— Jeffrey Parson

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Auburn
Sept. 8	SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 15	MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 29	at Texas
Oct. 6	KANSAS
Oct. 13	COLORADO
Oct. 20	at Oklahoma State
Oct. 27	BAYLOR
Nov. 3	at Iowa State
Nov. 10	at Nebraska
Nov. 17	MISSOURI
Nov. 24	at Fresno State

AGGIES

AT A GLANCE

2006

4-8 overall, 2-6 WAC (7th)

COACH

Hal Mumme — At NMSU: 4-20, 2 years; overall: 101-84-1, 16 years

RETURNING STARTERS

17; 10 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Chase Holbrook, WR Chris Williams, WR A.J. Harris, TE Nick Cleaver, LT Mike Martinez, MLB Dante Floyd, OLB La'Auli Fonoti, S Derrick Richardson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Chase Holbrook and Chris Williams will again be among the NCAA statistical leaders, but they're hardly the only playmakers. The offense has taken on the same pseudo-arrogance about the "Air Raid" as their coach and, despite only four wins in two years, believes it can move the ball on any defense.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

If Kyle Hughes doesn't work out at kicker, it will be more of the same problems. The defense has to live with being put in tough spots by the offense, and also needs to do a better job of getting to the quarterback.

KEY LOSSES

CB Courtney Bryan, LG Maveu Heimuli, LB Tim McManigal, LB Nathan Nuttall, SS Eric Carrie, DL Jeremy Weeks

OVERVIEW

Four of eight losses in 2006 found the Aggies with the ball in the final minute with a chance to tie or take the lead. They're close. If the defense can just slow down the opposition, the offense might be able to put up enough points to finally end the school's 47-year bowl drought.

Sound the Alarm: 'Air Raid' is Back for More

OFFENSE

With 10 starters returning to an offense that averaged more than 475 yards a game, expect to see more of the same for the "Air Raid" passing attack.

In Chase Holbrook, Hal Mumme feels he has as good a quarterback as he's ever coached, which includes the likes of Tim Couch and Jared Lorenzen at Kentucky.

Holbrook broke Ty Detmer's NCAA sophomore passing record, throwing for 4,619 yards last year despite missing the second half in two games. He has the size — 6-5, 235-pounds — to take hits and is now in his fourth year in the system.

At 5-9, receiver Chris Williams is easy to overlook, but he's Holbrook's favorite target and arguably one of the fastest players in the country. He led the nation with averages of 7.7 receptions and 117.9 yards per game. His 12-game totals were 92 receptions for 1,415 yards.

Williams leads a receiving corps that includes wideouts A.J. Harris (71 receptions) and Derek DuBois (53), and tight end Nick Cleaver (50).

Holbrook got pounded last year, but the line didn't allow a sack in the final two games after allowing 40 through the first 10. Left tackle Mike Martinez is the best of four starters back.

Justine Buries, the WAC's leading returning rusher going into the 2006 season, tore an ACL in the second game. Although he's back, he might not beat out sophomore Tonny Glynn or junior Jeremiah Williams.

DEFENSE

The depth in coordinator Woody Widenhofer's 3-4 scheme is the best it has been in three years.

While the high-risk, high-reward offense put the defense in plenty of difficult situations, it was the lack of a pass rush and inability to stop the run that led to the Aggies allowing 31 points (105th in the NCAA) and 389 yards per game (99th).

The pass rush won't come from the defensive line. Instead, the Aggies hope outside linebackers La'Auli Fonoti and Jamar Cotton can improve on the team's 15-sack season of a year ago.

Middle linebacker Dante Floyd and safety Derrick Richardson made the most of midseason starting opportunities in 2006 and enter this season as leaders. Replacing cornerback Courtney Bryan will be tough. Chris Woods and junior college transfer Vince Butler will try, while Alex Bernard will start on the left side.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Aggies ranked 15th in the nation in scoring last season while making just four field goals. When they abandoned that part of the game midway through the year, the result was an NCAA-leading 44 attempts on fourth down, with far too many drives stalling deep in enemy territory.

Freshman Kyle Hughes, who transferred to NMSU in the spring from prep school, will be the fifth kicker used by Mumme, who is heading into his third year.

Punting duties will again belong to Jared Kaufman, who averaged 41 yards in 2007.

— Geoff Grammer

TIGERS

For more coverage of the Tigers, visit www.missouri.rivals.com

AT A GLANCE

2006

8-5 overall, 4-4 Big 12 (2nd, North)

COACH

Gary Pinkel — At Missouri: 37-35, 6 years; overall; 110-72-3, 16 years

RETURNING STARTERS

15; 8 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Chase Daniel, TB Tony Temple, WR Will Franklin, TE Chase Coffman, TE Martin Rucker, DT Ziggy Hood, DT Lorenzo Williams, CB Darnell Terrell

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The emergence of Tony Temple gives the offense great balance to go with what might be the conference's most explosive trio of pass-catchers. The defense should be strong up the middle with Ziggy Hood and Lorenzo Williams anchoring the line.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The offensive line has experience, but is it physical enough to wear down defenses? Should an injury befall Temple, is there a capable fill-in? Depth is scarce along the defensive line, especially at end, where only two players with much experience return. There's even less experience among the backup linebackers.

KEY LOSSES

RT Joel Clinger, CB Domonique Johnson, WR Brad Ekwerekwu, DE Brian Smith, DE Xzavie Jackson, LB Marcus Bacon, LB Dedrick Harrington, S David Overstreet

OVERVIEW

Few teams will match Missouri's offensive firepower, but a young defense might produce some wild shootouts. If the Tigers can match the physical style of the best teams on the schedule, namely Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas A&M, there's hope they can represent the North in San Antonio.

Great Offense, Shaky Defense ... Tigers Won't Be Boring

Only seven teams in the country averaged more than Missouri's 425.6 yards per game last season. Of those seven, only New Mexico State returns its leading passer, rusher and receiver.

Missouri returns:

• Quarterback Chase Daniel, who set multiple school records in his first year as the starter.

• Running back Tony Temple, who is the Big 12's leading returning rusher.

• And of the 13 players who caught at least one pass last year, a dozen return, including All-Big 12 candidates in wide receiver Will Franklin and tight ends Chase Coffman and Martin Rucker.

Will that much firepower be enough to overcome an inexperienced defense and lead Missouri to bigger and better things, namely its second winning record in Big 12 play? Is it too much to expect a division championship? Maybe even a New Year's Day bowl?

It's a bright outlook for Missouri this season, one that might have been even brighter if the Tigers hadn't blown a 14-point fourth-quarter lead in the Sun Bowl last December.

A two-point conversion in the final seconds gave Oregon State a 39-38 victory and prevented Pinkel from reveling in his second Missouri win over a ranked opponent.

A victory might have convinced those Tiger fans teetering on the Pinkel fence that they had finally found the right man for a job that has been a revolving door of flawed leaders since Dan Devine walked out the door almost 40 years ago.

As it was, the season was at least a qualified success given that last season's unofficial goal was an ABS bowl — Anywhere But Shreveport. This year, with a schedule that includes only five teams that played in bowls last year, the expectations are higher than the Independence Bowl in Shreveport or a return to the Sun Bowl in El Paso.

"A year ago everyone was real young, and we didn't know what to expect," Pinkel said. "It's still going to be about being unselfish, being a team player and making plays. ... We'll see where it goes."

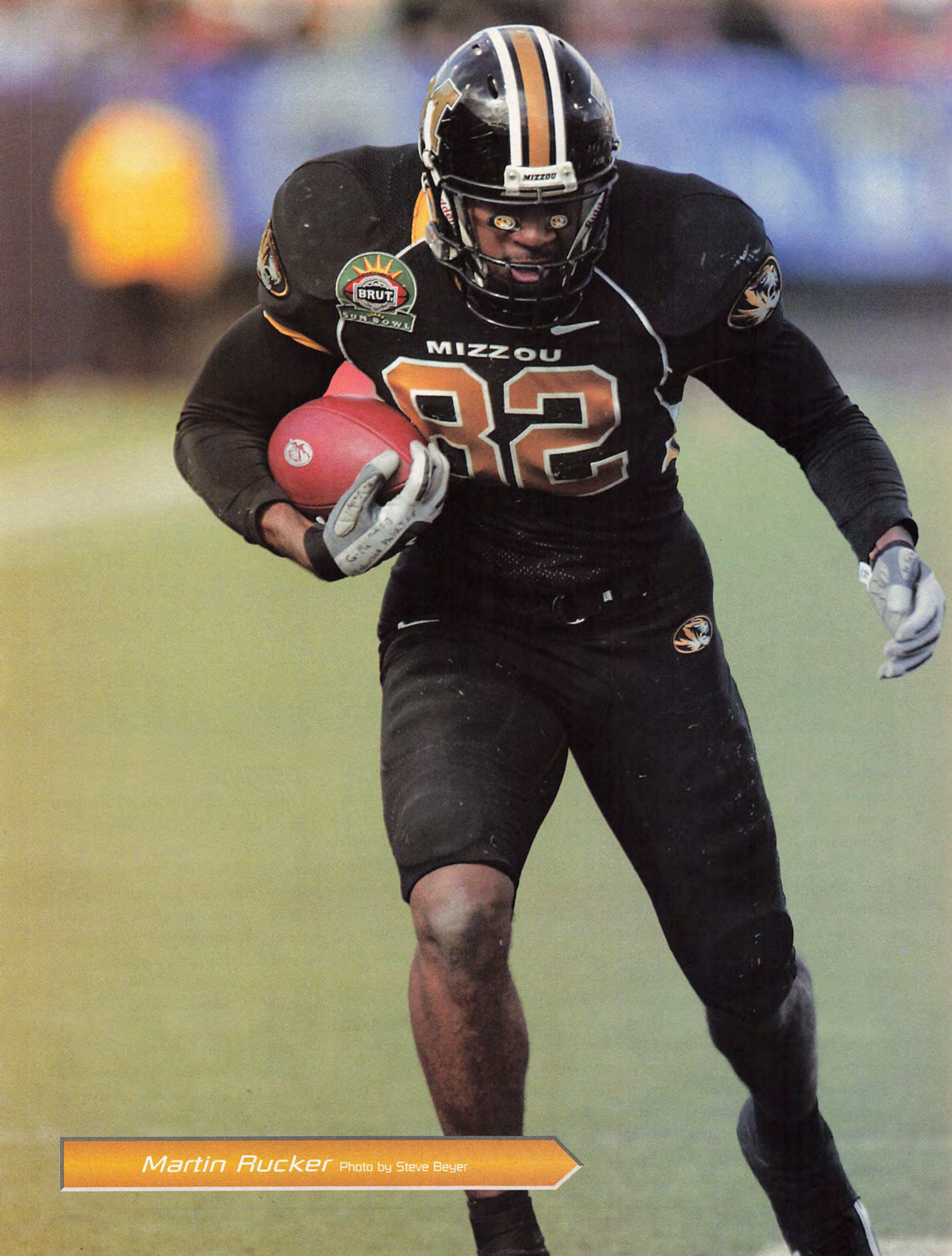
OFFENSE

Chase Daniel set school records for single-season passing yards and touchdowns in his first year as starting quarterback. But he's the first to share a secret: He's not the most important force in the no-huddle shotgun spread attack. That would be tailback Tony Temple.

"I told him before the bowl game, 'You're the catalyst in this offense,'" Daniel said. "When he's running hard, when he's running good, this offense is working."

Briefly benched for costly fumbles against New Mexico, Texas A&M and Oklahoma, Temple rewarded the staff's faith in his abilities with 194 yards on 20 carries in the Sun Bowl. He was one of two Big 12 backs to rush for more than 1,000 yards last year.

Temple's breakout game won't change what Missouri does best: spread the field with the Big 12's deepest collection of



Martin Rucker Photo by Steve Beyer

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

DARNELL TERRELL

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 149.5 ypg rushing (8th in Big 12/46th in NCAA), 276.2 ypg passing (2nd/10th), 425.6 ypg total offense (2nd/8th), 30.1 ppg (6th/20th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Chase Daniel*	Jr.	Owns Missouri's best career quarterback rating.	Chase Patton, Jr.
RB	Tony Temple*	Sr.	Exploded for 194 yards in the Sun Bowl.	Jimmy Jackson, Jr.
WR	Will Franklin*	Sr.	The most complete of Missouri's receivers.	Greg Bracey, Sr.
WR	Tommy Saunders*	Jr.	Former walk-on had 25 catches in '06.	Jason Ray, Sr.
WR	Danario Alexander	So.	Brilliant spring earned a promotion.	Jared Perry, So.
TE	Martin Rucker*	Sr.	Forms half of nation's best tight end duo.	Chase Coffman, Jr.
LT	Tyler Luellen*	Sr.	Third-year starter on the quarterback's blind side.	Colin Brown, Jr.
LG	Ryan Madison*	Jr.	He's an athletic big man in trenches.	Chris Tipton, Sr.
C	Adam Spieker*	Sr.	Back for a fourth season as starter.	Tim Barnes, Fr.
RG	Monte Wyrick	Sr.	Likely will rotate with Stigall.	James Stigall, So.
RT	Kurtis Gregory	So.	Missed spring after shoulder, knee surgeries.	Dain Wise, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 134.5 ypg rushing (7th in Big 12/58th NCAA), 185.7 passing (2nd/37th), 320.2 total defense (3rd/39th), 19.5 ppg (4th/33rd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Stryker Sulak	Jr.	Started 11 games in the past two years.	Bart Coslet, Fr.
DT	Ziggy Hood*	Jr.	Missouri needs big year from this big body.	Charles Gaines, Sr.
DT	Lorenzo Williams*	Sr.	The defense's most experienced player.	Jaron Baston, So.
DE	Tommy Chavis	Jr.	Versatile lineman is now a starter.	Tarell Corby, So.
LB	Sean Weatherspoon	So.	Defense's hardest hitter, young leader.	Steve Redmond, Jr.
LB	Brock Christopher*	Jr.	Moves into natural middle linebacker position.	Luke Lambert, Fr.
LB	Van Alexander	Jr.	Injuries have marred his career so far.	Michael Keck, Fr.
CB	Darnell Terrell*	Sr.	Has NFL size, speed and ability.	Castine Bridges, Jr.
CB	Hardy Ricks*	So.	Needs to improve after a rocky debut.	Paul Simpson, Sr.
SS	Pig Brown	Sr.	Has a real snout for the pigskin.	Justin Garrett, Jr.
FS	William Moore	Jr.	Elite athlete has all the tools.	Del Howard, So.

*Returning starter

receivers and tight ends. Will Franklin returns as the team's most dangerous receiving threat, though he'll have competition for that title this season.

Of Missouri's three freshmen receivers from 2006, Jared Perry surprised many by contributing the most, but Danario Alexander and Jeremy Maclin should also figure into the rotation significantly. Alexander passed Perry on the depth chart during spring camp, while Maclin continued a rapid recovery from knee surgery that cost him the entire 2006 season.

Former walk-on Tommy Saunders started 13 games last year and figures into the mix, along with senior reserves Greg Bracey and Jason Ray.

Chase Coffman and Martin Rucker are tight ends by name only as they line up all over the field, rarely with their hand on the ground.

Still, they were the most prolific tight end duo in the country last year, combining for 111 receptions for 1,149 yards and 14 touchdowns.

The line must replace two starters, including All-Big 12 right tackle Joel Clinger.

The Tigers have plenty in reserve, which they learned throughout spring camp as various injuries forced the line to mix and match positions.

A sophomore will replace Clinger, either Kurtis Gregory or Dain Wise. Center Adam Spieker and left tackle Tyler Luellen rank as two of the most experienced players on the roster.

DEFENSE

Opposing teams discovered the best strategy against the Tigers was to run right at them. Seven opposing running backs rushed for 100 yards or more in Missouri's final six regular-season games.

With six starters to replace, the defense is blessed to return its best two players in the middle. Defensive tackle Ziggy Hood and nose tackle Lorenzo Williams should form one of the best interior combos in the league.

"The sky is the limit for Ziggy," said Williams, who had six sacks and 10.5 tackles for loss last year. "And that's going to make me better, too."

There's less experience on the edge, though end Stryker Sulak has made 11 starts over the past two seasons.

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Michael Keck, LB

Harrisonville, Mo., linebacker Keck turned down a list of scholarship offers from schools in the Big Ten, SEC and Big 12 to stay at home and play for the Tigers. Regarded as the nation's No. 4 weakside defensive end prospect, Keck will bring a high motor and physical presence to the Tigers defense. He registered more than 260 tackles during his junior and senior seasons. He moved all the way to the No. 2 spot on the Tigers' depth chart at linebacker during spring drills.

Luke Lambert, LB

Like Keck, Lambert arrived early on campus for spring drills and he also rocketed up the depth chart. While he might not start as a true freshman, don't be surprised if you see him on the field quite a bit. A hard-nosed, no-nonsense type linebacker, Lambert is great from sideline to sideline.

Andy Maples, DT

The Tigers needed to add some major depth inside and it doesn't get any bigger than Maples, a four-star player from College of the Sequoias. At 6-3, 300 pounds, he'll be able to clog the middle, which is something you must do in the Big 12, but he's also quick enough to get after the quarterback.

THE SLEEPER

Kendall Irving, WR

An injury kept Arlington (Texas) Seguin receiver Kendall Irving from being rated higher, but when he's healthy, he can be a dynamic player. A speedy slot-receiver type, Irving should get valuable experience in his first years. In Missouri's passing attack, he's got the frame, speed and hands to be a truly deadly weapon. Not bad for a player that was only also offered by Baylor.

Committments	27
Average Stars	2.89
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	4
★★★☆☆	16
★★☆☆☆	7
Total Stars	78
National Rank: 32	Big 12: 6

2008 NEEDS

Quarterback is a huge priority for the Tigers in 2008 as Chase Daniel will need somebody to groom for the future. More playmakers at receiver and help at tight end are also going to be keys to the success of the 2008 class.

— Jeremy Crabtree, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
BEASLEY, J.T.	OL	6-2, 260	●●●	Dyersburg, TN	Dyersburg
Rivals.com's No. 23 overall prospect in Tennessee. ... No. 16 center nationally. ... First-team All-State.					
CORBETT, Jaysen	DE	6-4, 254	●●●	Sacramento, CA	Sacramento City College
Enrolled in January. ... First-team All-Conference. ... Had 70 tackles and 10 sacks as a senior at Sacramento.					
CRANE, Tyler	LB	6-2, 210	●●	Allen, TX	Allen
Could play linebacker or tight end. ... Had 98 tackles and nine sacks as a senior. ... Honorable mention All-State.					
EARNHARDT, Chris	DE	6-5, 250	●●●	Springfield, MO	Hillcrest
Rivals.com's No. 13 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 44 strongside defensive end nationally. ... First-team All-State. ... Had 108 tackles and 11 sacks as a senior.					
FISHER, Elvis	OL	6-5, 310	●●●	St. Petersburg, FL	Catholic
State qualifier in track for four years. ... Benches 330 pounds. ... Squats 500.					
GACKHAR, Andrew	LB	6-2, 208	●●	Overland Park, KS	Overland Park
Rivals.com's No. 12 overall prospect in Kansas. ... Limited by injury senior season. ... Had 83 tackles, five sacks and an interception as a junior.					
GARRETT, Justin	DB	6-2, 200	●●●	Pasadena, CA	Pasadena City College
Enrolled in January. ... Originally singed with Tennessee in 2006. ... Had 83 tackles and 3.5 tackles for a loss as a senior.					
GETTIS, Carl	RB	5-10, 187	●●●	O'Fallon, MO	Ft. Zumwalt West
Rivals.com's No. 11 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 45 running back nationally. ... Rushed for 1,300 yards and 21 touchdowns as a senior. ... Also had 700 receiving yards.					
HAMILTON, Dominique	DT	6-4, 279	●●●	El Paso, TX	Chapin
Rivals.com's No. 64 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 35 defensive tackle nationally. ... Had 90 tackles and eight sacks as a senior. ... Honorable mention All-State.					
HARRY, Jake	K	6-1, 190	●●	San Marcos, CA	Palomar JC
Redshirted as true freshman at Oregon State before transferring to Palomar. ... Averaged 38.9 yards per punt.					
HOBSON, Trey	DB	5-10, 167	●●●	Stanley, KS	Blue Valley
Rivals.com's No. 10 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 68 safety nationally.... Honorable mention All-State.					
IRVING, Kendall	WR	5-10, 175	●●	Arlington, TX	Seguin
Slowed by knee injury as a senior. ... Did not play football until his junior season. ... Started at wide receiver and defensive back.					
KECK, Michael	DE	6-5, 215	●●●●	Harrisonville, MO	
Rivals.com's No. 62 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 2 prospect in Missouri. ... No. 4 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Enrolled in January. ... *Parade* All-American.					
LAMBERT, Luke	LB	6-3, 215	●●●	Brookfield, MO	
Rivals.com's No. 14 prospect in Missouri. ... No. 40 outside linebacker nationally. ... Enrolled in January. ... All-State. ... Had 165 tackles and two interceptions as a senior.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
MAPLES, Andy	DT	6-3, 300	●●●●	Visalia, CA	College of the Sequoias
Rivals.com's No. 16 overall junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January.					
MOORE, De'vion	RB	5-8, 178	●●●	St. Louis, MO	Hazelwood Central
Rivals.com's No. 18 overall prospect in Missouri. ... Rushed for 1,640 yards as a senior. ... Also had 341 receiving yards. ... Scored 20 total touchdowns.					
MOYE, Gilbert	ATH	6-2, 200	●●●●	Diboll, TX	Diboll
Rivals.com's No. 30 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 30 athlete nationally. ... District MVP.					
NEAL, Donte	DB	5-11, 190	●●	Arlington, TX	Seguin
Two-time first-team All-District. ... Had 88 tackles, eight tackles for a loss and five sacks as a senior.					
PALMGREN, Jayson	OL	6-2, 295	●●●	Kansas City, MO	N. Kansas City
Rivals.com's No. 8 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 21 offensive guard nationally. ... Two-time All-State.					
RESONNO, Terrell	DE	6-3, 250	●●●	Jefferson City, MO	
Rivals.com's No. 12 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 43 strongside defensive end nationally. ... First-team All-State.					
TOWNSON, Jason	DE	6-4, 268	●●	Visalia, CA	College of the Sequoias
Signed with Missouri in 2005. ... First-team All-State. ... Had 91 tackles and six sacks in 2004.					
VAUGHNS, Tremane	ATH	5-9, 180	●●●	Pasadena, CA	Pasadena City College
Enrolled in January. ... Played wide receiver, quarterback, defensive back and running back, as well as returning kicks and punts.					
WASHINGTON, Derrick	RB	5-11, 194	●●●●	Peculiar, MO	Raymore-Peculiar
Rivals.com's No. 5 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 20 running back nationally. ... Rushed for 1,930 yards and 31 touchdowns as a senior.					
WEBB, Bryan	TE	6-4, 254	●●	Tecumseh, OK	Tecumseh
Rivals.com's No. 24 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... Caught 11 passes for 225 yards and two touchdowns as a senior.					
WHITE, George	LB	6-2, 252	●●●	Flint, MI	Carman-Ainsworth
Rivals.com's No. 17 prospect in Michigan. ... No. 24 inside linebacker nationally. ... Had 103 tackles and 15 tackles for a loss as a senior.					
WOODLAND, Rolandis	WR	6-5, 185	●●●	Fenton, MO	Rockwood Summitt
Rivals.com's No. 9 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 74 wide receiver nationally. ... Caught 30 passes for 800 yards and three touchdowns as a senior.					
WUEBBELS, Austin	OL	6-4, 260	●●●	Troy, IL	Triad
Rivals.com's No. 29 overall prospect in Illinois. ... No. 47 offensive guard nationally. ... Also played defensive line and linebacker.					

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
81	DANARIO ALEXANDER	WR	6-4	205	So	Marlin, TX
5	VAN ALEXANDER	LB	6-0	230	Jr	Columbia
32	QURAN BARGE	LB	6-0	215	Jr	Camden, NJ
62	TIM BARNES	OL	6-4	305	Fr	Marshall
96	JARON BASTON	DL	6-1	295	So	Blue Springs
95	STEVEN BLAIR	DL	6-3	235	Sr	Godfrey, IL
40	MARQUIS BOOKER	LB	6-1	235	Fr	Ardmore, OK
70	GORDON BOWEN	OL	6-1	300	So	Memphis, TN
85	GREG BRACEY	WR	6-2	215	Sr	Milwaukee, WI
24	MACK BREED	S	6-1	205	Jr	San Antonio, TX
36	CASTINE BRIDGES	DB	6-2	200	Jr	Richmond, CA
61	COLIN BROWN	OL	6-8	325	Jr	Braymer
13	CORNELIUS BROWN	DB	5-11	205	Sr	Adel, GA
10	TRAVIS CARDOZA	S	5-11	205	Sr	Springfield
28	ADAM CASEY	WR	6-1	195	Jr	Chesterfield
63	TOMMY CHAVIS	DL	6-2	280	Jr	Orange, TX
34	BROCK CHRISTOPHER	LB	6-2	240	Jr	Kearney
45	CHASE COFFMAN	TE	6-6	245	Jr	Peculiar
48	JAYSEN CORBETT	DL	6-4	254	Jr	Galt, CA
97	TARELL CORBY	DL	6-3	235	So	Kansas City
98	BART COSLET	DL	6-5	240	Fr	St. Peters
90	ADAM CROSSETT	P/K	6-3	225	Sr	Liberty
10	CHASE DANIEL	QB	6-0	225	Jr	Southlake, TX
2	CONNELL DAVIS	LB	6-3	215	So	Portland, TX
35	JEREMY DAVIS	DB	6-1	185	Fr	St. Louis
26	KEVIN DUNCAN	S	5-10	205	Jr	O'Fallon, IL
3	WILLIAM FRANKLIN	WR	6-2	205	Sr	St. Louis
91	CHARLES GAINES	DL	6-1	305	Sr	Hayti
43	MARLON GALBREATH	LB	6-2	215	Fr	Jefferson City
86	CHRIS GARES	WR	5-11	195	So	Hartsburg
8	JUSTIN GARRETT	DB	6-2	200	Jr	Baton Rouge, LA
53	JEFF GETTYS	LB	6-3	215	Fr	Houston
43	JON GISSINGER	TE	6-3	235	So	San Diego, CA
7	EARL GOLDSMITH	TB	5-9	200	Jr	Denton, TX
78	KURTIS GREGORY	OL	6-5	305	So	Blackburn
5	DOMINIC GROOMS	QB	6-1	185	Fr	Tampa, FL
69	JESSE HERNANDEZ	OL	6-2	305	Fr	Ardmore, OK
94	EVANDER HOOD	DL	6-4	295	Jr	Amarillo, TX
17	DEL HOWARD	S	5-11	195	So	Dallas, TX
32	AUSTIN HUFF	TB	5-8	190	So	Brentwood, TN
1	JIMMY JACKSON	TB	5-9	200	Jr	Caruthersville
22	ALEX JOANES	S	6-3	200	So	Blair Oaks
49	MICHAEL KECK	TE/LB	6-5	215	Fr	Harrisonville
33	LUKE LAMBERT	TB/LB	6-3	215	Fr	Brookfield
53	ANDY LOYD	DL	6-2	220	Fr	Branson
79	TYLER LUELLEN	OL	6-7	295	Sr	Bethany
9	JEREMY MACLIN	WR	6-1	185	Fr	Kirkwood
76	RYAN MADISON	OL	6-5	300	Jr	Bethany
92	ANDY MAPLES	DL	6-3	300	Jr	Lester, AL
26	BLAKE MAY	WR	5-11	190	So	Kansas City
65	ZACH MILLIGAN	DL	6-1	220	Fr	Hardin
21	WILLIAM MOORE	S	6-1	215	Jr	Hayti
29	SHERMAN NEWSOME	DB	5-10	170	So	New Madrid
87	LUCAS NULL	WR	6-0	200	Jr	Crystal City
31	MICHALE OLDROYD	WR	5-10	170	Fr	Eureka
25	AARON O'NEAL	LB	6-3	220	Jr	Creve Coeur
14	CHASE PATTON	QB	6-5	220	Jr	Columbia
8	JARED PERRY	WR	6-1	170	So	La Marque, TX
65	MIKE PRINCE	OL	6-4	295	Fr	Southlake, TX
4	JASON RAY	WR	6-1	215	Sr	Porter, OK
18	STEVE REDMOND	LB	6-0	235	Jr	Kansas City
28	HARDY RICKS	DB	6-0	190	So	St. Louis
82	MARTIN RUCKER	TE	6-6	255	Sr	St. Joseph
20	ERIK RUDIN	DB	5-9	180	So	St. Louis
41	JOHN RUTH	LB	5-10	220	Jr	Jefferson City
16	KEVIN RUTLAND	S	6-0	185	Fr	Houston, TX
84	TOMMY SAUNDERS	WR	6-0	210	Jr	Kearney
57	RYAN SCHELSNEUR	OL	6-3	250	Fr	Maryville
64	JOE SCHUMACHER	LB	5-11	235	So	Columbia
88	FORREST SHOCK	WR	6-1	200	Fr	Osage Beach
6	PAUL SIMPSON	DB	6-2	190	Sr	Oakland, CA
77	PAUL SPIEKER	OL	6-3	305	Sr	Webb City
51	JAMES STIGALL	OL	6-3	305	So	Blue Springs
93	JOHN STULL	DL	6-4	275	Fr	Columbia
38	STRYKER SULAK	DL	6-5	240	Jr	Rockdale, TX
22	TONY TEMPLE	TB	5-9	200	Sr	Kansas City
3	DARNELL TERRELL	DB	6-3	205	Sr	St. Louis
30	LA'RODERICK THOMAS	DB	6-0	185	Fr	Dallas, TX
13	J.P. TILLMAN	QB	6-3	250	Fr	Houston, TX
54	CHRIS TIPTON	OL	6-4	310	Sr	Bowling Green
50	JAMIE VAUGHN	OL	6-2	250	Fr	Elgin, IL
11	TREMAINE VAUGHNS	WR/DB	5-9	180	Jr	Patterson, LA
9	TRENILE WASHINGTON	DB	5-11	190	Jr	Marietta, OK
12	SEAN WEATHERSPOON	LB	6-1	230	So	Jasper, TX
99	LORENZO WILLIAMS	DL	6-1	295	Sr	Midwest City, OK
68	DAIN WISE	OL	6-5	305	So	Midwest City, OK
99	JEFF WOLFERT	PK	6-2	185	Jr	Overland Park, KS
20	MARCUS WOODS	TB	5-8	195	Sr	Farmington Hills, MI
71	MONTE WYRICK	OL	6-5	325	Sr	Texarkana, AR

NOTEBOOK

Nose tackle **Lorenzo Williams** missed the first few weeks of spring practice after waking up one night with a throbbing pain shooting down his left leg. He was diagnosed with anterior compartment syndrome, a condition that occurs when the leg muscle becomes too big for the sheath that surrounds it.

Williams underwent a surgery that included two incisions to let the muscle expand. He returned for all of the spring scrimmages but had to monitor the leg closely — as well as his right leg — to make sure the condition didn't return.

- Wide receiver **Will Franklin** changed jersey numbers from No. 3 to No. 2 to honor former teammate and friend **Damien Nash**, who collapsed and died on Feb. 24 after playing alongside Franklin in a charity basketball game in their hometown of St. Louis.

Nash, a member of the Denver Broncos, wore No. 2 for Missouri in 2003-04.

- After spending two years at the bottom of the tailback depth chart, **Connell Davis** took up his coaches' suggestion and moved to outside linebacker midway through spring camp.

The tallest of MU's tailbacks at 6-3, Davis had trouble holding onto the ball in practices. He played mostly with the third-team defense in the spring but could earn playing time this fall.

- Reserve linebacker **Quran Barge** missed the first four weeks of spring camp after recovering from a gunshot wound suffered during the winter semester break in his hometown of Camden, N.J. A stray bullet entered his left shoulder and punctured his lung.

- As part of **Gary Pinkel's** raise last November, his assistant coaches received pay hikes of upwards of 30 percent. Offensive coordinator **Dave Christensen** will earn $197,204, up from last year's salary of $153,204. Defensive coordinator **Matt Eberflus** will earn $194,206, up from $148,206.

Pinkel's staff has gone unchanged since his first season at Missouri in 2001, a rarity in today's game.

- Three players considered leaving Missouri a year early for the NFL: Franklin, cornerback **Darnell Terrell** and tight end **Martin Rucker**, who was told by the league's advisory committee that he projected as a fifth-round pick.

Rucker is Missouri's career leader for receptions (119) and receiving yards (1,341) by a tight end.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
C. Daniel	13	145.06	287	452	10	63.5	3527	28	74	271.3
B. Coleman	8	1.53	1	6	1	16.7	13	0	13	1.6

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
T. Temple	13	193	1151	88	1063	5.5	7	65	81.8
C. Daniel	13	147	598	219	379	2.6	4	25	29.2
J. Jackson	13	32	129	6	123	3.8	1	16	9.5

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
C. Coffman	13	58	638	11.0	9	37	49.1
M. Rucker	13	53	511	9.6	5	47	39.3
W. Franklin	11	48	829	17.3	6	68	75.4

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: M. Bacon 112, D. Harrington 100, D. Overstreet 93
Interceptions: B. Massey 3, M. Bacon 2, D. Howard 2, D. Johnson 2
Sacks: X. Jackson 8, B. Smith 7.5, L. Williams 6
Tackles for loss: X. Jackson 13.5, L. Williams 10.5, B. Smith 9.5

Results

(8-5, 4-4)

W	MURRAY STATE	47-7
W	OLE MISS	34-7
W	at New Mexico	27-17
W	OHIO	31-6
W	COLORADO	28-13
W	at Texas Tech	38-21
L	at Texas A&M	19-25
W	KANSAS STATE	41-21
L	OKLAHOMA	10-26
L	at Nebraska	20-34
L	at Iowa State	16-21
W	KANSAS	42-17
	Sun Bowl	
L	vs. Oregon State	38-39

CHASE COFFMAN

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

The other starting end, Tommy Chavis, contributed some last year playing tackle and end. Of the backups, only Tarell Corby has any Division I-A experience, and most of that came last year on special teams.

Experience is thin at linebacker, too, but there's plenty of potential. Brock Christopher moves to the middle after making 11 starts on the strong side last year. After missing almost all of last season with a groin injury, Van Alexander played every snap of the spring.

The best of the bunch might be weakside starter Sean Weatherspoon, who played some as a freshman reserve last year and emerged as the unit's most explosive player during the spring.

Cornerback Darnell Terrell, the only returning defensive back who started every game last year, is big, strong and physical — prerequisites for Missouri's Cover-2 scheme. He leads all Tigers in career interceptions (nine) and break-ups (12). At the other corner spot, Hardy Ricks started eight games last year but will be challenged by Castine Bridges for starting duties.

The safety tandem has a new look with free safety William Moore and strong safety Pig Brown expected to earn the No. 1 jobs. Justin Garrett, a junior college transfer who signed with Tennessee in 2006 but never enrolled there, and converted cornerback Del Howard will compete for the third safety spot, which usually handles the nickel back assignment.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jeff Wolfert beat out incumbent kicker Adam Crossett last summer and then put together a record-shattering season, setting single-season team marks for points by a kicker (99), field goals made (18), extra points (45) and field goal percentage (.900).

The former Missouri diver had to give up his scholarship with the swim team to try out for the football team, but his standout season earned him a scholarship in the offseason.

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Chase Daniel
Set MU's single-game record for touchdown passes with five in last year's opener. ... Went on to set numerous team passing records, including single-season yardage (3,527) and touchdowns (28). ... Doesn't have blazing speed, but picks his spots well, rushing for 379 yards and four touchdowns last year. ... Needs to cut down on interceptions; had five in losses to Oklahoma and Nebraska. ... Was at his best in season's last two games, picking apart Kansas (356 yards, four TDs) and Oregon State (330, two TDs) in the Sun Bowl.

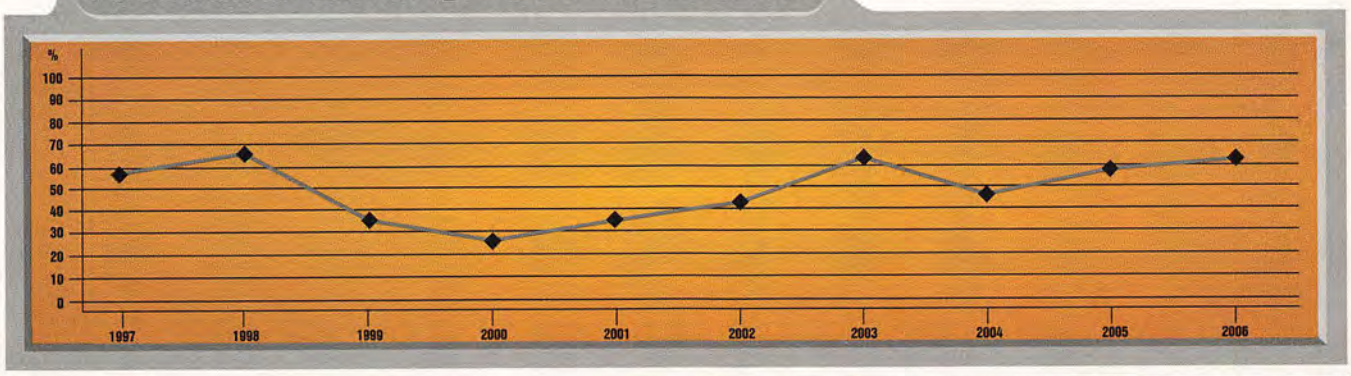
EMERGING STAR

OLB Sean Weatherspoon
Emotional second-year player earned time as a backup middle linebacker and special teams ace as a true freshman last year. ... After making a team-high nine tackles on kickoff coverage, was named Special Teams Player of the Year. ... With the loss of two senior linebackers, 'Spoon moves over to the weakside position where his speed, coverage skills and blitzing ability should be a weapon. ... Delivered the biggest hits of spring practice and emerged as a leader of the defense.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Jeremy Maclin
Saw his promising debut shattered last summer when he tore knee ligaments playing catch a few days before preseason camp. ... On his surgically repaired knee, Maclin was timed in the 4.3-second range in the 40-yard dash in February. ... He finished the spring listed behind fellow 2006 freshman Danario Alexander. ... As his knee continues to recover, expect Maclin to emerge as an all-around threat similar to teammate Will Franklin.

Missouri's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

CHASE DANIEL

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

Chase-ing Down the Record Books

Junior quarterback Chase Daniel is a film junkie — whether it's in the spacious quarterback meeting room at Missouri's football headquarters or a few miles east on Stadium Boulevard at Hollywood Theaters.

When he's not watching DVDs of opposing defenses or breaking down his last practice, he might be down the road catching the latest flick. Midway through Missouri's spring camp, he was raving about his latest favorite.

"I saw '300' a couple of times," he said. "I really liked it."

With Daniel in charge this fall, don't expect another Thermopylae. Unlike the film's outnumbered Spartans, Daniel has plenty of help. He is surrounded by arguably the best collection of skill players in team history.

"I have to say if you want to put high expectations on us, then go right ahead," Daniel said.

"Of course, we're going to welcome it. We want to have that. ... As an offense, we have a very, very high expectation level of ourselves to go out and execute every single play every single day."

A year ago this time, Daniel insisted there was an open quarterback competition to replace departed senior Brad Smith. He wasn't fooling anyone. He made cameo appearances in 10 games as a freshman in 2005 so that Missouri wouldn't regress when he made the transition to full-time starter in '06.

There was no regression. It took him 11 possessions in the opening game to enter the record books as he tossed five touchdown passes in his debut as the starter. He went on to rank fifth nationally in total offense, averaging 300.5 yards per game, and set Missouri records for passing yards (3,527) and touchdowns (28).

Coach Gary Pinkel says Daniel is the most accurate passer he has ever coached, a group that includes five NFL quarterbacks, including Chris Chandler and Mark Brunell.

"I know he had an exceptional year last year as a sophomore, but like everyone else, he has to work to get better," Pinkel said. "The good news is he works as hard as anyone on the team."

The best news for Daniel came this winter when he measured 6-0 for the first time that he can remember — though he was listed at 6-1 in last year's team media guide.

"It's what God gave me and what I have to deal with," he said. "I think it's worked out pretty fine right now."

Crossett is still the No. 1 punter, but he'll have competition when junior college transfer Jake Harry arrives.

Wideout Tommy Saunders was the best of Missouri's punt returners last year, but he'll have competition from Marcus Woods, Jeremy Maclin, Jared Perry and newcomer Tremaine Vaughn. They all could challenge last year's kick return leader, tailback Earl Goldsmith.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The Tigers open the season resuming their series with Illinois in the Edward Jones Dome in St. Louis, then travel to Oxford, Miss., to face Mississippi, a team the Tigers had little trouble with in last year's 34-7 victory in Columbia.

The Big 12 season begins with a crucial home game against Nebraska, pitting the two favorites for the North Division, then a road trip to Oklahoma.

The regular season concludes with a neutral-site game at Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium against rival Kansas, the first meeting in a two-year agreement the schools signed in January.

— Dave Matter

SCHEDULE

Sept. 2	MURRAY STATE
Sept. 9	OLE MISS
Sept. 16	at New Mexico
Sept. 23	OHIO
Sept. 30	COLORADO
Oct. 7	at Texas Tech
Oct. 14	at Texas A&M
Oct. 21	KANSAS STATE
Oct. 28	OKLAHOMA
Nov. 4	at Nebraska
Nov. 18	at Iowa State
Nov. 25	KANSAS

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CORNHUSKERS

AT A GLANCE

2006

9-5 overall, 6-2 Big 12 (1st, North)

COACH

Bill Callahan – At Nebraska and overall: 21-15, 3 years

RETURNING STARTERS

13; 7 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Sam Keller, RB Marlon Lucky, WR Maurice Purify, OL Matt Slauson, LB Bo Ruud, LB Corey McKeon, CB Cortney Grixby, FS Tierre Green

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Four starters return from an offensive line that helped Nebraska rank in the Top 25 in all four major offensive categories. The wide receiving corps is deep and talented. The linebacking unit, one of the best in the country, anchors the defense.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Nebraska must replace its entire defensive front, and the Huskers probably will lose highly regarded cornerback Zack Bowman for at least part of the season with a knee injury. Depth is questionable at running back, making it critical to keep Marlon Lucky healthy.

KEY LOSSES

QB Zac Taylor, FB Dane Todd, RB Brandon Jackson, DE Adam Carriker, DE Jay Moore, DT Barry Cryer, DT Ola Dagunduro, LB Stewart Bradley

OVERVIEW

A lot will have to go right for Nebraska to regain elite status, but the Huskers enter the season as the favorites in the still-suspect Big 12 North. A tough schedule stands in the way, but the program still can still show progress in Callahan's fourth season.

Huskers Hungry for Return to Days of Dominance

It has been a foregone conclusion in most corners of the Cornhusker state that Sam Keller will be Nebraska's quarterback when the season opens Sept. 1.

The one place the decision hasn't been made is in the Memorial Stadium office of head coach Bill Callahan. While others consider Keller the clear-cut favorite to replace All-Big 12 quarterback Zac Taylor, Callahan is intent on keeping the race open deep into preseason camp.

"We won't name any starter until we get into the end of training camp," Callahan said. "It's positive that players continue to compete on a consistent basis. I wish I had a crystal ball, but you can't make determinations too soon."

Keller joined the program last season, making a hasty exit from Arizona State after losing the starting quarterback assignment to Rudy Carpenter. He was ASU's starter for seven games in 2005, throwing for 2,165 yards, before a hand injury took him out of the lineup.

Junior Joe Ganz emerged in spring as Keller's chief competition, although Callahan isn't counting out junior Beau Davis, freshman Patrick Witt and junior college transfer Zac Lee.

Callahan was particularly impressed with Witt, who graduated from high school early to participate in spring drills. Lee, the son of former NFL quarterback Bob Lee, was injured and did not practice in the spring.

The starter has big shoes to fill. Taylor rewrote the school's passing record book in just two years in the program. He threw for 5,850 yards and earned all-conference honors in addition to being named the Big 12's Offensive Player of the Year in 2006.

Under Taylor's direction, Nebraska made dramatic offensive improvement in 2006 that resulted in the Huskers winning the Big 12 North Division title and returning to the conference championship game for the first time since 1999.

Nebraska finished in the Top 25 nationally in the four major offensive statistical categories in 2006, including 14th in total offense. The Huskers averaged 94.3 yards per game more in 2006 than in the previous season, when they wound up 96th in total offense.

OFFENSE

There was a time when the value of wide receivers within the Nebraska offense was based primarily on blocking ability, not pass-catching skills. Then Callahan brought in the West Coast offense, changed the value of Nebraska wideouts, and began to accumulate talented targets to use in the passing offense.

"The receiving corps is the strength of this football team, and we're going to have to rely on that heavily throughout the course of the year," Callahan said.

"It's great to have wide receivers that have been in the system, and that have experience and have knowledge of how to get open and make plays."

The biggest playmaker of the bunch is Maurice Purify, a big-body senior (6-4, 220) who made an immediate

Marlon Lucky Photo by Bruce Schwartzman

PHOTO BY DOUGLAS JONES/ICON SMI

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 170.5 ypg rushing (6th in Big 12/23rd in NCAA), 244.1 ypg passing (4th/23rd), 414.6 ypg total offense (3rd/14th), 30.6 points ppg (4th/17th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Sam Keller	Sr.	Transfer year allowed him to learn the offense.	Joe Ganz, Jr.
RB	Marlon Lucky	Jr.	Accounted for 1,200 all-purpose yards in '06.	Cody Glenn, Jr.
FB	Matt Senske	Sr.	Has big shoes to fill following Dane Todd.	Andy Sand, Sr.
WR	Terrence Nunn*	Sr.	Ranks second in school history with 101 catches.	Nate Swift, Jr.
WR	Maurice Purify*	Sr.	Physical player is Huskers' top playmaker at wide receiver.	Todd Peterson, Jr.
TE	J.B. Phillips*	Sr.	Could also see action at H-back or fullback.	Josh Mueller, Sr.
LT	Carl Nicks	Sr.	Has physical tools to be powerful force up front.	Jacob Hickman, So.
LG	Andy Christensen*	Jr.	Familiar face was a part-time starter last season.	Mike Huff, Jr.*
C	Brett Byford*	Sr.	Took over when illness struck starter Kurt Mann.	Victory Haines, Sr.
RG	Matt Slauson*	Jr.	Moves to guard after starting at tackle in 2006.	Mike Huff, Jr.
RT	Lydon Murtha	Jr.	Inconsistency has kept him from dominating.	Jacob Hickman, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 116.6 ypg rushing (5th in Big 12/37th NCAA), 215.3 ypg passing (6th/79th), 331.9 ypg total defense (5th/56th), 18.3 points ppg (2nd/24th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Zach Potter	Jr.	Key special teams performer gets chance to start.	Clayton Sievers, Jr.
DT	Ty Steinkuhler	Jr.	Moved inside last year and became part of rotation.	Brandon Johnson, Sr.
DT	Ndamukong Suh	So.	Had eight TFL and 3.5 sacks in limited action as frosh.	Shukree Barfield, Jr.
DE	Barry Turner	Jr.	Disruptive pass rusher needs to show he can play the run.	Pierre Allen, Fr.
LB	Bo Ruud*	Sr.	All-Big 12 performer shifts to strong side this season.	Lance Brandenburgh, Sr.
LB	Corey McKeon*	Sr.	Three-year starter in middle is one of league's best.	Phillip Dillard, So.
LB	Steve Octavien	Sr.	Injuries have prevented him from showcasing potential.	Lance Brandenburgh, Sr.
CB	Cortney Grixby*	Sr.	Uses leaping ability and speed to offset lack of size.	Armando Murillo, Jr.
CB	Andre Jones*	Sr.	Made solid improvement in first season as starter.	Corey Young, So.
SS	Larry Asante	Jr.	Junior college transfer is big hitter NU needs at this position.	Rickey Thenarse, So.
FS	Tierre Green*	Sr.	Exceptional athlete shifts from strong to free safety.	Ben Eisenhart, Sr.

*Returning starter

impact last season by averaging almost 18 yards per catch and scoring seven touchdowns.

Terrence Nunn, the school's second all-time leading receiver, Nate Swift, Frantz Hardy and Todd Peterson bring a variety of skills to the position.

The trio of J.B. Phillips, Josh Mueller and Hunter Teafatiller combined for eight touchdown catches at tight end last season.

A veteran line that returns seven players with starting experience should be an asset.

Brett Byford, Andy Christensen, Mike Huff and Matt Slauson each started at least six games in 2006, although Huff missed spring drills after tearing his Achilles' tendon. Nebraska needs breakout seasons from tackles Carl Nicks and Lydon Murtha to add to the effectiveness of this group.

Nebraska has to overcome the loss of leading rusher Brandon Jackson, who decided to turn pro after rushing for nearly 1,000 yards as part of the four-back rotation.

Marlon Lucky, one of the top recruits in the nation when he joined the program two seasons ago, appears set to become the featured back, as Cody Glenn has been slowed by health issues.

Lucky accounted for more than 1,200 all-purpose yards last season, but threw a scare into the Husker Nation when he suffered a knee injury in the spring game.

The "minor sprain" was expected to be fine by summer.

DEFENSE

The linebacking corps is to the Nebraska defense what the wide receiver position is to the Husker offense. This is a group that doesn't expect to skip a beat in spite of the loss of three-year starter Stewart Bradley.

All-Big 12 linebacker Bo Ruud will shift from the weakside position to fill Bradley's strongside spot. Steve Octavien could be a big-time playmaker on the weak side if he avoids injuries that have slowed his development the past two seasons. Corey McKeon is a fixture in the middle and the defense's emotional leader.

Lance Brandenburgh is a proven backup, while Phillip Dillard could be a big contributor as he returns from a knee injury.

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Quentin Castille, RB

Though it first appeared that Castille would be walking into a very deep running back list, things are more open now. Already close to the 240-pound mark, Castille's power running style could allow him to play early in Lincoln. He's physically ahead of most freshmen.

Marcus Mendoza, RB

Mendoza isn't strictly a running back,. He's a guy that can be used in a variety of ways. His 4.4 speed in the 40 could allow him to play running back, slot receiver or help on special teams. Having enrolled at mid-term for spring football helps his chances of seeing early playing time.

Adi Kunalic, K

Armed with a big leg, Kunalic could play as a freshman. With the departure of Jordan Congdon, a two-year starter, Kunalic could jump into the mix early. Kunalic will have to adjust to the college kicking game, but his confidence and strength should help.

THE SLEEPER

Curenski Gilleylen, WR

Though Gilleylen didn't receive as high a ranking as other receiver prospects in Texas, the 6-0, 210-pounder is already rock solid physically. He has plenty of speed to stretch the field. Athleticism could earn him some playing time in Year Two, and he could have a bright future in a pro-style offense.

Committments	27
Average Stars	3.33
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	10
★★★☆☆	16
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	90
National Rank: 13	Big 12: 2

2008 NEEDS

Tight end is one of the bigger positions of need in the 2008 class after the Huskers had some misses in the 2007 group. Also, the Huskers will look to add depth and speed at the linebacker position. Look for at least one quarterback to be signed in the 2008 group.

— John Talman, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
AMUKAMARA, Prince	ATH	6-1, 180	✪✪✪	Glendale, AZ	Apollo
Rivals.com's No. 11 overall prospect in Arizona. ... No. 57 athlete nationally. ... Rushed for 2,106 yards and 24 touchdowns as a senior.					
ASANTE, Larry	DB	6-1, 205	✪✪✪✪	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville CC
Rivals.com's No. 9 overall junior college prospect. ... Honorable mention junior college All-American.					
BARFIELD, Shukree	DT	6-4, 310	✪✪✪	Garden City, KS	Garden City CC
Rivals.com's No. 40 overall junior college prospect. ... Had 54 tackles and five sacks at Garden City in 2006. ... Signed with Rutgers out of high school.					
BLUE, Anthony	DB	5-10, 172	✪✪✪	Cedar Hill, TX	
Rivals.com's No. 62 safety nationally. ... Second-team All-State. ... Played on Class 5A state championship team.					
BURKES, Jaivorio	OL	6-4, 311	✪✪✪✪	Phoenix, AZ	Moon Valley
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 3 overall prospect in Arizona. ... No. 7 offensive guard nationally.					
CASTILLE, Quentin	RB	6-1, 234	✪✪✪✪	La Porte, TX	La Porte
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 36 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 2 fullback nationally. ... Rushed for more than 1,900 yards and 22 touchdowns as senior.					
CRICK, Jared	DE	6-6, 255	✪✪✪	Cozad, NE	Cozad
Rivals.com's No. 4 prospect in Nebraska. ... No. 45 strongside linebacker nationally. ... Had 68 tackles and six tackles for a loss as a senior.					
DAVIS, Demetrious	DT	6-2, 286	✪✪✪	St. Joseph, MO	Benton
Rivals.com's No. 10 overall prospect in Missouri. ... No. 39 defensive tackle nationally. ... Class 4A All-State.					
DIXON, Kevin	DT	6-3, 292	✪✪✪✪	Garden City, KS	Garden City CC
Rivals.com's No. 36 junior college prospect nationally. ... Had 42 tackles and eight sacks at Garden City last season.					
GILLEYLEN, Curenski	WR	6-0, 210	✪✪✪	Leander, TX	Leander
Rivals.com's No. 52 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 49 wide receiver nationally. ... Caught 30 passes for 915 yards and nine touchdowns.					
HAGG, Eric	ATH	6-1, 192	✪✪✪	Peoria, AZ	Ironwood
Rivals.com's No. 15 overall prospect in Arizona. ... Caught 49 passes for 920 yards and nine touchdowns as a senior.					
HELU, Roy	RB	5-11, 206	✪✪✪	Danville, CA	San Ramon Valley
Rivals.com's No. 55 running back nationally. ... Ran for 1,085 yards and 11 touchdowns as a senior. ... Added 300 receiving yards.					
HILL, Ryan	TE	6-3, 230	✪✪✪	Arvada, CO	Arvada West
Rivals.com's No. 13 overall prospect in Colorado. ... No. 41 tight end nationally. ... Caught 42 passes for 924 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
JONES, Marcel	OL	6-7, 310	✪✪✪	Phoenix, AZ	Trevor Browne
Rivals.com's No. 13 overall prospect in Arizona. ... Honorable mention All-State.					
KUNALIC, Adi	K	6-0, 175	✪✪	Fort Worth, TX	North Crowley
Rivals.com's No. 18 kicker. ... Made four of six field goal attempts ... Successful on 29 of 31 extra point attempts. ... Averaged almost 40 yards per punt.					
LAWRENCE, Blake	LB	6-2, 199	✪✪✪✪	Overland Park, KS	Shawnee Mission W.
Rivals.com's No. 1 overall prospect in Kansas. ... No. 18 linebacker nationally. ... Also started at quarterback . ... Had 60 tackles and three interceptions as a senior.					
LEE, Zac	QB	6-2, 200	✪✪✪✪	San Francisco,CA	San Francisco CC
Rivals.com's No. 10 overall junior college prospect. ... Passed for more than 3,400 yards and 35 touchdowns in 2006. ... Completed more than 64 percent of his passes.					
MENDOZA, Marcus	RB	5-10, 175	✪✪✪	Houston, TX	Spring Woods
Rivals.com's No. 65 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 12 all-purpose back nationally. ... Rushed for 700 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior. ... Also had 250 receiving yards.					
MOORE, Terrence	DT	6-3, 267	✪✪✪	New Orleans, LA	McDonogh 35
Rivals.com's No. 22 prospect in Louisiana. ... No. 41 defensive tackle nationally. ... Had 31 tackles for loss and 14 sacks as a senior.					
MURILLO, Armando	DB	6-0, 195	✪✪✪✪	Thatcher, AZ	Eastern Arizona CC
Rivals.com's No. 21 overall junior college prospect. ... Had seven interceptions and two touchdowns last sesaon.					
PAUL, Niles	WR	6-2, 210	✪✪✪✪	Omaha, NE	North
Rivals.com's No. 83 prospect nationally. ... No. 1 prospect in Nebraska. ... No. 10 wide receiver nationally. ... Had 814 receiving yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior.					
STAFFORD, Austin	LB	6-2, 197	✪✪✪	Hayward, CA	Hayward
Rivals.com's No. 45 prospect in California. ... No. 26 outside linebacker nationally. ... Had 14 sacks as a senior.					
SULLIVAN, Shawn	DB	5-11, 182	✪✪✪	Brenham, TX	Brenham
Rivals.com's No. 43 cornerback nationally. ... All-District wide receiver as a senior.					
TOWNSEND, Joseph	DT	6-4, 295	✪✪✪✪	Los Altos Hills, CA	Foothill College
Rivals.com's No. 30 overall junior college prospect nationally. ... First-team All-League.					
WASHINGTON, Latravis	DB	6-3, 210	✪✪✪	Bradenton, FL	Bayshore
Rivals.com's No. 65 overall prospect in Florida. ... No. 39 safety nationally. ... Had five sacks as a senior.					
WITT, Patrick	QB	6-4, 215	✪✪✪	Wylie, TX	Wylie
Rivals.com's No. 84 prospect in Texas. ... No. 18 pro-style quarterback nationally. ... Passed for 1,846 yards and 17 touchdowns as a senior.					
YANCY, William	DE	6-4, 223	✪✪✪✪	Glendale, AZ	Ironwood
Rivals.com's No. 4 overall prospect in Arizona. ... No. 19 strongside defensive end nationally. ... Had seven sacks as a senior.					

CORNHUSKERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
95	PIERRE ALLEN	DE	6-5	265	Fr	Denver, CO
4	LARRY ASANTE	S	6-1	210	So	Alexandria, VA
56	SHUKREE BARFIELD	DT	6-4	310	Jr	Camden, NJ
66	CRUZ BARRETT	OL	6-4	325	Fr	Daytona Beach, FL
56	JUSTIN BAUMGARTNER	LS	6-2	255	Jr	Cheyenne, WY
57	DENNIS BERGLAND	OL	6-1	290	Fr	Plattsmouth
14	ZACKARY BOWMAN	CB	6-2	200	Sr	Anchorage, AK
40	LANCE BRANDENBURGH	LB	6-1	230	Sr	Overland Park, KS
1	CHRIS BROOKS	WR	6-2	210	So	St. Louis, MO
59	BRETT BYFORD	OL	6-3	300	Sr	Hartselle, AL
82	WES CAMMACK	WR	5-11	185	So	DeWitt
62	ANDY CHRISTENSEN	OL	6-3	300	Jr	Bennington
45	NICK COVEY	LB	6-2	240	So	Glendale, AZ
6	MAJOR CULBERT	IB	6-0	210	So	Harbor City, CA
15	BEAU DAVIS	QB	6-4	180	Jr	Venice, CA
52	PHILLIP DILLARD	LB	6-1	250	So	Tulsa, OK
46	BEN EISENHART	S	5-11	200	Sr	Culbertson
26	DAN ERICKSON	WR	6-1	195	Sr	Omaha
	TYRONE FAHIE	DL	6-3	260	Fr	Virginia Beach, VA
27	RYAN FORD	DB	5-11	175	So	Winfield, AL
12	JOE GANZ	QB	6-1	200	Jr	Palos Heights, IL
	AARON GILLASPIE	FB	6-2	235	Fr	Littleton, CO
39	DAN GLASSMAN	TE	6-4	245	Fr	Omaha
34	CODY GLENN	IB	6-0	230	Jr	Rusk, TX
30	TIERRE GREEN	S	6-1	200	Sr	Omaha
2	CORTNEY GRIXBY	CB	5-9	170	Sr	Omaha
75	VICTORY HAINES	OL	6-7	290	Sr	Logan, UT
7	FRANTZ HARDY	WR	6-1	190	Sr	Miami, FL
80	HARVEY FRANTZ	DE	6-4	255	So	LaPlata, MD
90	ALEX HENERY	PK	6-2	170	Fr	Omaha
9	WILL HENRY	WR	6-5	210	Fr	El Paso, TX
67	JACOB HICKMAN	OL	6-4	285	So	Bakersfield, CA
86	SEAN HILL	TE	6-3	250	Sr	Lisle, IL
4	MENELIK HOLT	WR	6-4	215	So	San Diego, CA
61	MIKE HUFF	OL	6-4	300	So	Ralston
91	SETH JENSEN	DT	6-3	295	Fr	Fort Morgan, CO
71	ZACH JEPSON	DT	6-2	235	Fr	Omaha
96	BRANDON JOHNSON	DT	6-3	315	Sr	Chicago, IL
25	ANDRE JONES	CB	6-0	190	Sr	Ft. Walton Beach, FL
73	D.J. JONES	OL	6-5	310	Fr	Omaha
5	SAM KELLER	QB	6-4	230	Sr	Danville, CA
19	TYLER KESTER	DB	6-1	205	Sr	Clearwater
30	PATRICK KITZUL	WR	6-1	195	Fr	Driftwood, TX
40	COLTON KOEHLER	LB	6-1	230	So	Harvard
36	THOMAS LAWSON	FB/IB	6-0	240	Jr	Parker, CO
29	DANIEL LEE	PK	6-0	195	Jr	Kansas City, MO
3	ZAC LEE	QB	6-2	210	So	San Francisco, CA
20	MARLON LUCKY	IB	6-0	210	Jr	North Hollywood, CA
89	KEVIN LUHRS	DT	6-1	270	Sr	Omaha
35	JUSTIN MAKOVICKA	FB	6-1	235	Fr	Ulysses
63	BEN MARTIN	DT	6-4	270	Fr	Lincoln
55	NATHAN McBRIDE	LS	6-1	205	So	Scottsdale, AZ
78	ROBBIE McEWEN	LS	6-0	235	Jr	North Platte
13	COREY McKEON	LB	6-1	225	Sr	Naperville, IL
58	ANDY McNEIL	LB	6-1	245	Fr	Omaha
44	MIKE McNEILL	TE	6-4	225	Fr	Kirkwood, MO
32	MARCUS MENDOZA	IB	5-10	175	Fr	Houston, TX
38	KYLE MOORE	LB	6-2	225	Fr	Elkhorn
81	JOSH MUELLER	TE	6-5	265	Sr	Columbus
5	ARMANDO MURILLO	CB	6-0	195	Jr	Tampa, FL
76	LYDON MURTHA	OL	6-7	305	Jr	Hutchinson, MN
77	CARL NICKS	OL	6-5	330	Sr	Salinas, CA
83	TERRENCE NUNN	WR	6-0	190	Sr	Houston, TX
33	MATT O'HANLON	S	5-11	200	Jr	Bellevue
82	T.J. O'LEARY	LS	6-1	245	Jr	Omaha
15	STEVE OCTAVIEN	LB	6-0	240	Sr	Naples, FL
17	TODD PETERSON	WR	6-4	210	Jr	Grand Island
85	J.B. PHILLIPS	TE	6-3	245	Sr	Colleyville, TX
69	JORDAN PICOU	OL	6-2	305	Sr	Rialto, CA
98	ZACH POTTER	DE	6-7	280	Jr	Omaha
86	ANDY POULOSKY	DE	6-2	255	Sr	Ponca
16	MAURICE PURIFY	WR	6-4	220	Sr	Eureka, CA
85	THOMAS RICE	DE	6-1	240	Sr	Lincoln
55	CRAIG ROARK	DT	6-2	305	So	Ada, OK
84	XAVIER RUCKER	WR	5-6	160	Fr	Minneapolis, MN
51	BO RUUD	LB	6-3	240	Sr	Lincoln
48	ANDY SAND	FB	6-2	230	Sr	Lincoln
42	MATT SENSKE	FB	6-3	245	Sr	Bellevue
88	CLAYTON SIEVERS	DE	6-4	245	Jr	Elkhorn
70	MATT SLAUSON	OL	6-5	335	Jr	Colorado Springs, CO
97	MIKE SMITH	OL	6-6	285	Fr	Las Vegas, NV
43	TY STEINKUHLER	DT	6-3	285	Jr	Lincoln
91	MICHAEL SUCH	P	6-2	205	Fr	Allen, TX
93	NDAMUKONG SUH	DT	6-4	305	So	Portland, OR
84	TONY SULLIVAN	DE	6-3	240	Sr	Wahoo
87	NATE SWIFT	WR	6-2	200	Jr	Hutchinson, MN
46	BEN TASA	TE	6-4	230	Fr	Humphrey
89	HUNTER TEAFATILLER	TE	6-3	230	Jr	Kingsburg, CA
3	RICKEY THENARSE	DB	6-0	190	So	Los Angeles, CA
97	DAN TITCHENER	P	6-0	200	Jr	Cheyenne, WY
99	BARRY TURNER	DE	6-3	250	Jr	Antioch, TN
4	ADAM WATSON	S	6-0	185	Fr	Lincoln
37	JAKE WESCH	PK	6-1	200	Jr	North Bend
22	ANTHONY WEST	S	6-0	195	Fr	San Diego, CA
68	KEITH WILLIAMS	OL	6-5	310	Fr	Florissant, MO
9	BRYAN WILSON	S	6-1	205	Sr	Granada Hills, CA
27	KENNY WILSON	IB	6-0	220	Sr	Liberal, KS
6	PATRICK WITT	QB	6-4	215	Fr	Wylie, TX
53	TYLER WORTMAN	LB	6-3	230	Jr	Grand Island
23	COREY YOUNG	DB	6-0	195	So	Omaha
49	DREU YOUNG	TE	6-4	220	Fr	Cozad

NOTEBOOK

I-back **Marlon Lucky** is expected to be at full strength when the Huskers open preseason practice in August.

Lucky was one of two projected offensive starters that suffered injuries during Nebraska's spring game. The other, tackle **Lydon Murtha**, also is expected to be ready when camp opens.

Lucky suffered a sprained medial collateral ligament when tackled late in the spring game.

The Huskers need him healthy. Leading rusher Brandon Jackson left for the NFL, and **Kenny Wilson** already has been declared out for 2007 with a broken leg. The Huskers' other experienced I-back, **Cody Glenn**, battled a foot injury during spring drills.

The Huskers experimented with moving **Major Culbert** from safety to I-back in the spring. Callahan said no determination has been made where Culbert will line up in the fall.

"I really liked what I saw of Major this spring," Callahan said. "He's developed; he's worked hard; he shows qualities that we like. It always good to train these guys in different roles."

The Huskers will add **Quentin Castille** and **Roy Helu** in the fall. Another freshman, **Marcus Mendoza**, arrived early and went through spring drills.

- **Larry Asante** earned a reputation as a big hitter in junior college. From what the Huskers saw in the spring, Asante is as vicious as advertised.

Asante passed up a possible interception during the spring game in order to lay a lick on a receiver. Cornerback **Cortney Grixby** asked Asante why he had no interest in the football.

"He said, 'Man, I just said forget the pick, I might as well just try to kill him,'" Grixby said. "I'm like, 'OK, I see where your mindset is at.'"

Asante ran with the first team in the spring game alongside returning starter **Tierre Green**. Along with **Rickey Thenarse** and **Bryan Wilson**, they give Nebraska a chance to be more physical in 2007.

- For the second straight season, Nebraska's game against Southern California will air in primetime. ABC will televise the Sept. 15 meeting in Lincoln. The Trojans pulled out a 28-10 victory over Nebraska in the 2006 meeting in Los Angeles.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Att	Cmp	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
Z. Taylor	14	146.12	391	233	8	59.6	3197	26	78	228.4
J. Ganz	5	208.83	13	7	0	53.8	122	3	31	24.4

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
B. Jackson	14	188	1023	34	989	5.3	8	48	70.6
M. Lucky	14	141	762	34	728	5.2	6	51	52.0
C. Glenn	9	71	375	5	370	5.2	8	36	41.1

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
T. Nunn	14	42	597	14.2	3	75	42.6
M. Purify	14	34	630	18.5	7	63	45.0
B. Jackson	14	33	313	9.5	2	49	22.4

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: S. Bradley 76, A. Jones 74, C. McKeon 69
Interceptions: A. Shanle 4, B. Ruud 2, six with 1
Sacks: A. Carriker 7, J. Moore 6, O. Dagunduro 3.5, S. Ndamukong 3.5
Tackles for loss: J. Moore 17, A. Carriker 16, O. Dagunduro 9

Results

(9-5, 6-2)

W	LOUISIANA TECH	49-10
W	NICHOLLS STATE	56-7
L	at USC	10-28
W	TROY	56-0
W	KANSAS	OT 39-32
W	at Iowa State	28-14
W	at Kansas State	21-3
L	TEXAS	20-22
L	at Oklahoma State	29-41
W	MISSOURI	34-20
W	at Texas A&M	28-27
W	COLORADO	37-14
L	at Oklahoma	7-21
	Cotton Bowl	
L	vs. Auburn	14-17

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

With the defensive line going through a makeover, and the secondary stung by the loss of Zack Bowman to injury, the Huskers must get solid play from their linebackers. Or, as McKeon sees it, "It's on the linebackers' shoulders to get this defense going."

Nebraska's line is undergoing an extreme makeover. The Huskers must find replacements for ends Jay Moore and Adam Carriker, and tackles Barry Cryer and Ola Dagunduro.

The only player in the new front four with starting experience is sophomore Ndamukong Suh, who is considered a budding star at tackle. Zach Potter and Ty Steinkuhler emerged from spring as leading candidates on the line, but there's plenty of work to do with this group.

"We graduated some outstanding players," Callahan said, "but that's not to say that the upcoming players will not be outstanding."

Bowman flirted with the possibility of heading for the NFL after missing all of last season, with a torn ligament in his knee. He decided to return for his senior season, but suffered another injury — a torn tendon in his other knee — that clouds the possibility he will play another game for the Huskers.

The Huskers return both starters at cornerback in Cortney Grixby and Andre Jones, and Tierre Green is set to move from strong safety to free safety. A positive development in spring drills was the big-time hitting ability displayed by newcomer Larry Asante, as well as sophomore Rickey Thenarse.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Jordan Congdon, who attempted just seven field goals, did not make a kick longer than 40 yards.

Congdon, a two-year starter, left the program, leaving kickoff man Jake Wesch and freshmen Adi Kunalic and Alex Henery to compete for the job. Dan Titchener, who averaged 39.3 yards per punt, is back.

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

LB Bo Ruud

Huskers will look to returning All-Big 12 linebacker to solidify its inexperienced defense. ... He shifts from the weakside to strongside linebacker spot to replace Stewart Bradley. ... Ruud finished fourth on the team in 2005 with 65 tackles, including seven for losses. He also intercepted two passes, broke up four and recovered three fumbles. ... Played one of his best games in crucial Big 12 win over Missouri, posting seven tackles, returning an interception 40 yards and sealing victory with fumble recovery. ... Had career-best 15 tackles in victory at Kansas State.

EMERGING STAR

RB Marlon Lucky

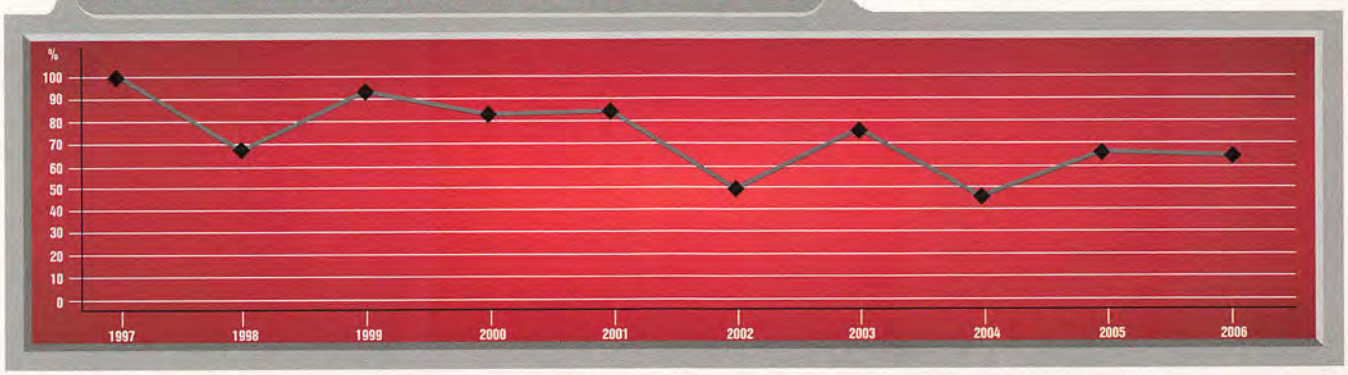
One of the nation's top recruits when he joined the program, Lucky already is a proven performer but could be on brink of a breakout season as he figures to be featured running back. ... He is Huskers' leading returning rusher with 728 yards, and he accounted for 1,264 all-purpose yards. ... Earned second-team all-league honors from The Associated Press as an all-purpose player. ... Showed dependable receiving skills out of the backfield with 32 catches for 383 yards as sophomore. ... Threw a 25-yard touchdown pass against Texas.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Sam Keller

Nebraska's West Coast offense is predicated on having a solid quarterback, and the Huskers figure they got a good one in this Arizona State transfer. ... Spent transfer year learning the offense and was named Huskers' scout team Player of the Year. ... As a junior at ASU, threw for 2,165 yards and 20 touchdowns in seven games before hand injury ended his season. ... Threw for 461 yards against LSU in 2005. .. Had four games with four touchdown passes.

Nebraska's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

Ruud Move Adds to NU's Versatility

Some all-conference players might fight a switch from a position where they earned all-star recognition.

Not linebacker Bo Ruud.

The senior will move from weakside to strongside linebacker for his senior season. Ruud, who earned All-Big 12 honors last season, will replace Stewart Bradley, a three-year starter.

"Being a guy who played the weak side last year, you almost feel left out sometimes," Ruud said. "Teams were going at the bubble strongside, throwing a lot more strongside.

"They're putting me in a position this year to be in the mix a lot. Really, I like what they're doing with me."

What the Huskers are doing, coach Bill Callahan said, is trying to take advantage of Ruud's versatility.

"We love the fact that he's a complete player with a lot of upside," Callahan said. "He has a lot of potential to do a lot of great things."

One of Ruud's strengths is his pass-coverage ability. The 6-3 Ruud has intercepted four passes and broken up 10 others in the past two seasons.

At 240 pounds, he's more mobile than Bradley, who was listed at 250 pounds last season and was the heaviest linebacker at the NFL combine at 254. Nebraska played the heftier Bradley almost like a fifth defensive lineman.

Nebraska expects to drop Ruud into pass coverage more than it did with Bradley.

"We're not changing philosophies, we're just adding to the package," Ruud said. "I'm going to be playing in different positions than what teams are used to seeing from the SAM."

That very much makes Ruud an X-factor — as a blitzer, or covering slot receivers, or jamming the tight end or ... whatever else Callahan needs.

The move opens up the weakside position for Steve Octavien, a talented player whose development has been slowed by injuries. Octavien was named the starter before the 2005 season but broke his leg in the first half of the opener against Maine. Ruud has started 23 games over the past two years.

"We always would have liked to have them on the field at the same time, but we had Stew and we weren't going to get Stew off the field," defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said.

"Now it gives us the ability to get them both out there at the same time."

Nebraska returns the majority of players who handled return chores. The Huskers need more in those departments as it ranked 112th nationally in kickoff returns (17.4 yards per return) and 69th in punt returns (8.2).

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Nebraska will face a demanding schedule that includes a visit by preseason No. 1 Southern California on Sept. 15, one week after the Huskers travel to play at defending ACC champion and senior-laden Wake Forest.

Nebraska opens the season at home against Nevada, which played in the MPC Computers Bowl last season.

Two of Nebraska's most stringent Big 12 tests will be on the road — at Missouri and at Texas. The meeting with Missouri on Oct. 6 could provide the winner with an inside track to the North Division title.

Of the Huskers' four Big 12 home games, only the conference opener against Iowa State figures to be a decided mismatch.

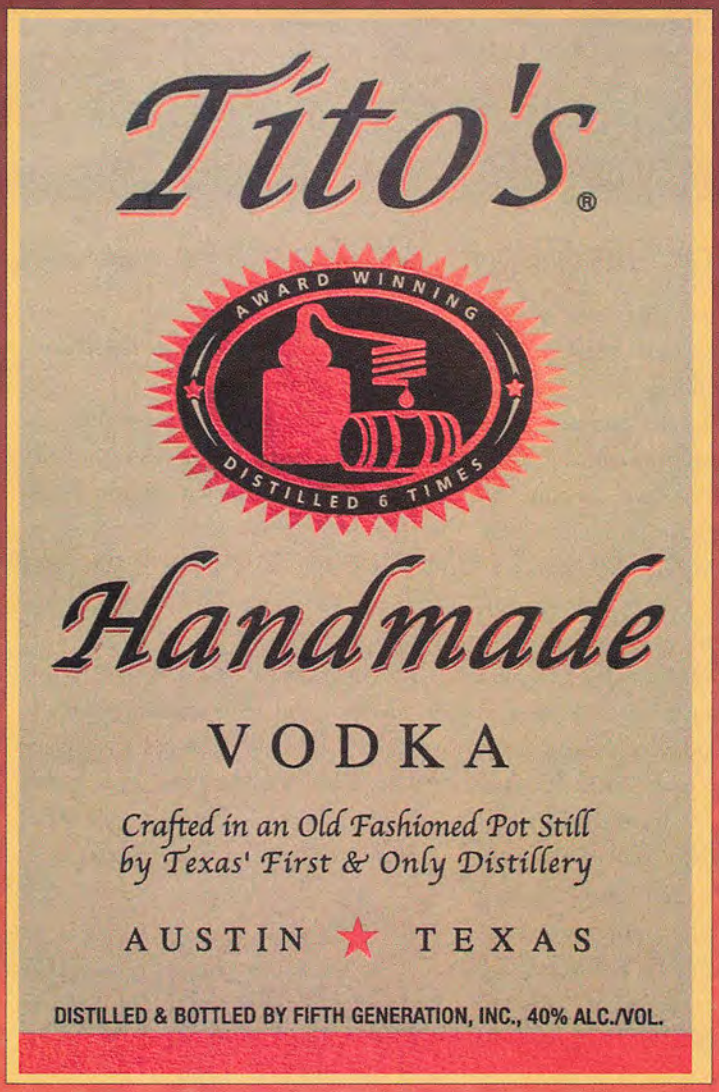
— Steve Pivovar

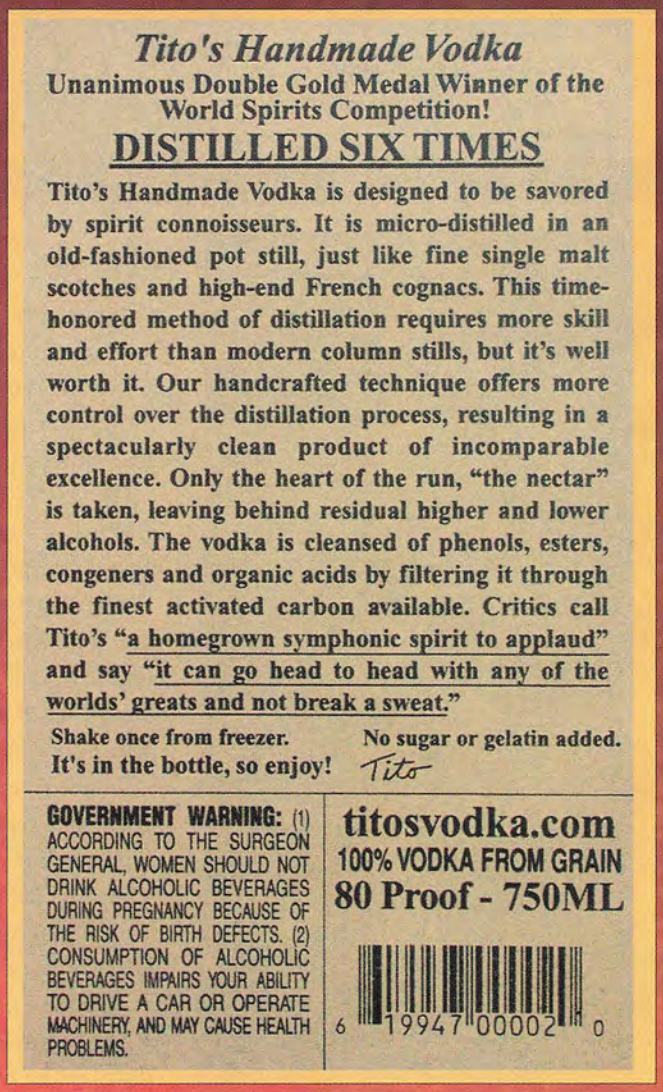
SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NEVADA
Sept. 8	at Wake Forest
Sept. 15	USC
Sept. 22	BALL STATE
Sept. 29	IOWA STATE
Oct. 6	at Missouri
Oct. 13	OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 20	TEXAS A&M
Oct. 27	at Texas
Nov. 3	at Kansas
Nov. 10	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 23	at Colorado

For Vodka Lovers, Not Bottle Collectors.

Our labels tell the story!





And the Winner Is...

HMR magazine assembled a panel of four experts! Here's *their* story...

The panels' goal was to taste each of our six contestants under various conditions and score them accordingly. Our test was organized into samplings with each spirit being tasted at room temperature, chilled, and finally, mixed in a martini! While some of our judges had difficulty deciding with just a single sampling, we made them finish the test before we poured another round!

Each vodka had the potential to earn forty points per category, for a total of 120 points. While some of these vodkas were well known and old favorites, others were complete strangers to our panel. So let's see how they stack up!

Our official standings are as follows:

	CHILLED	ROOM TEMP	MIXED MARTINI	TOTAL
YOURI	9	4	6	19
KETEL ONE	20	21	22	63
PEARL	25	33	17	75
TITO'S	**30**	**36**	**33**	**99**
GREY GOOSE	20	12	15	47
CHOPIN	15	22	16	53

First Place - TITO'S
Second Place - PEARL
Third Place - KETEL ONE
Fourth Place - CHOPIN
Fifth Place - GREY GOOSE
Sixth Place - YOURI DOLGORUKI

HMR magazine, November / December, 2004

To find out more about Tito's Handmade Vodka, take a virtual tour at **www.titosvodka.com**

AT A GLANCE

2006

11-3 overall, 7-1 Big 12 (1st, South)

COACH

Bob Stoops — At Oklahoma and overall: 86-19, 8 years

RETURNING STARTERS

16; 8 offense, 6 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

RB Allen Patrick, RB/RS DeMarco Murray, WR Malcolm Kelly, CB/RS Reggie Smith, CB Marcus Walker, K Garrett Hartley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:

The offense is flush with wideouts, tight ends and running backs. Star tailback Adrian Peterson will be replaced by a committee of former high school All-Americans. A capable offensive line has many moving parts.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Sure, there are plenty of players who can catch the ball, but who will throw it to them? Quarterback is a three-headed monster of inexperience. Defensive end suffered significant losses with the departures of three seniors. Also gone are two superb linebackers.

KEY LOSSES

RB Adrian Peterson, QB Paul Thompson, LB Rufus Alexander, DE Larry Birdine, MLB Zach Latimer, OT Chris Messner, DE C.J. Ah You.

OVERVIEW

The Sooners played in three national title games from 2000 to 2004. In the past two years, OU has had the audacity to lose seven games. Such results are unacceptable to crazed fans ready for another title shot. If questions at quarterback and along the defensive front are answered, another chance at a national championship might not be an outlandish expectation.

OU has Done This Before: Win Big with a New QB

Oklahoma's bowl experience was so adventurous last season that Hollywood came calling.

Unfortunately for the Sooners, Boise State was cast in a starring role.

The 2007 Fiesta Bowl became an instant classic, one of the most memorable games in recent college football history.

Incessant references to the Broncos' stunning 43-42 overtime upset over seventh-ranked OU will no doubt follow this year's Sooners, but they might have the talent to create a storybook ending of their own.

Despite running back Adrian Peterson bolting one year early for the NFL draft, despite losing roughly half of the total tackles on defense, and despite having essentially three rookies running neck-and-neck in a three-horse race at starting quarterback, OU still might be good enough to win its fifth Big 12 Conference crown in the eight seasons to make yet another BCS bowl appearance.

That should be enough to erase those bad Fiesta Bowl memories.

Boise State jumping out to a 14-0 lead in the first quarter ... stretching its lead to 28-10 midway through the third quarter ... storming back to tie the game at 35-35 with a 50-yard hook-and-lateral connection on fourth-and-18 with seven seconds left in regulation ... scoring on a five-yard halfback option pass on fourth down in overtime ... winning the game on a two-point conversion with a behind-the-back handoff to running back Ian Johnson, who promptly celebrated by proposing to his favorite cheerleader on the sideline.

OU coach Bob Stoops tipped his visor to Boise State.

"I've never seen or been in one like it," Stoops said of the game.

No one had ever seen anything like this either: The fifth-year seniors on last year's squad completed a somewhat unfathomable "BCS slam" by getting to play in all four BCS bowls — the Rose Bowl in 2003, Sugar ('04), Orange ('05) and the Fiesta in '07.

If its quarterback quandary no longer is in question, and if inconsistency can be conquered, Oklahoma figures to be playing in January again. Sure, there could even be a BCS rematch against Boise State.

Hey ... Hollywood loves a sequel.

OFFENSE

It is with tremendous pride that Stoops reminds observers that his Sooners have won four Big 12 championships with four different starting quarterbacks.

So forgive Stoops if he doesn't fret about this year's quarterback derby involving junior Joey Halzle, redshirt freshman Sam Bradford (a former Top-20 QB recruit) and freshman Keith Nichol.

"We're used to this," Stoops said. "Hopefully, we'll get back to another one with a different quarterback."

Stoops protected all three candidates throughout the spring, shielding them from media and a potential onslaught of day-by-day status reports.

The quarterback mystery remained unsolved going into the summer. With the head man mum on the subject, here's an educated assessment of the pecking order heading into fall practice: Bradford,

Malcolm Kelly Photo by John Williamson

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 177.1 ypg rushing (3rd in Big 12/17th in NCAA), 191.6 ypg passing (10th/70th), 368.7 ypg total offense (8th/40th), 30.3 ppg (5th/19th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Sam Bradford	Fr.	Redshirt freshman in three-way battle for starting job.	Joey Halzle, Jr.
RB	Allen Patrick	Sr.	Honorable mention All-Big 12, even as a backup.	C. Brown, So./D. Murray, Fr.
WR	Malcolm Kelly*	Jr.	All-American candidate sat out spring after knee surgery.	Adron Tennell, So.
WR	Juaquin Iglesias*	Jr.	No. 2 receiver last year with 41 receptions and 514 yards.	Fred Strong, Jr.
WR	Manuel Johnson	Jr.	Another outstanding receiver; 36 receptions last season.	Brandon Caleb, So.
TE	Jermaine Gresham	So.	Freakish athlete adds to an impressive group of tight ends.	Joe Jon Finley, Sr. *
LT	Phil Loadholt	Jr.	Junior college transfer is a huge addition.	Cory Brandon, Fr.
LG	George Robinson*	Jr.	"Duke" has gotten smaller ... and better.	Sherrone Moore, Sr.
C	Jon Cooper*	Jr.	Second-highest grade for O-linemen at 77 percent last year.	Chase Beeler, So.
RG	Brandon Walker*	Jr.	Started every game in '06; is being pushed by Simmons.	Brian Simmons, So.
RT	Branndon Braxton*	Jr.	Started seven games last year before breaking his left leg.	Trent Williams, So.*

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 98.7 ypg rushing (2nd in Big 12/16th in NCAA), 188.4 ypg passing (3rd/41st), 287.1 ypg total defense (1st/16th), 17.3 ppg (1st/19th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Alonzo Dotson	Sr.	Had some shining moments playing in nine games in '06.	Auston English, So.
DT	DeMarcus Granger	So.	Two heralded recruits battle to fill a key vacant spot.	Gerald McCoy, Fr.
DT	Cory Bennett*	Jr.	Plenty of experience working in four-man rotation in '06.	Steven Coleman, Sr.*
DE	John Williams	Sr.	Slowed by knee surgery two years ago; now, gets his chance.	Auston English, So.
LB	Curtis Lofton	Jr.	Has unenviable task of trying to replace Rufus Alexander.	Brandon Crow, Fr.
LB	Mike Reed	Jr.	Junior college transfer will try to fill void left by Zach Latimer.	Ryan Reynolds, So.
LB	Lewis Baker	Sr.	Former DB weighs only 210, but found a place at LB.	Demarrio Pleasant, Sr.
CB	Reggie Smith*	Jr.	All-Big 12 pick returns to cornerback after playing strong safety.	Dominique Franks, Fr.
CB	Marcus Walker*	Sr.	Second-team All-Big 12; makes OU strong at both corners.	Lendy Holmes, Jr.*
SS	D.J. Wolfe	Sr.	Though he has struggled at times, he keeps bouncing back.	Keenan Clayton, So.
FS	Nic Harris	Jr.	Former nickel back was second-team All-Big 12 as safety.	Darien Williams, Sr.*

*Returning starter

Halzle, Nichol.

We do know this about the player who lines up behind junior center Jon Cooper — he'll have plenty of help.

The Sooners have a dozen quality receivers among their wideouts, tight ends and running backs. Junior wide receiver Malcolm Kelly is a budding superstar. He sat out spring ball after getting his knee scoped. Fellow starters Juaquin Iglesias and Manuel Johnson also are hard to check, and backup Adron Tennell strutted his stuff in the spring.

OU essentially has three starting tight ends in Jermaine Gresham, Joe Jon Finley and Brody Eldridge.

The Sooners have enough quality running backs to return to the wishbone with Allen Patrick, Chris Brown, DeMarco Murray, Mossis Madu and Jacob Gutierrez.

Their linemen are talented, interchangeable and monstrous, with a starting five that averages 6-5 and 316 pounds.

"Man, this is an exciting team. They'll put some points on the board," said Adrian Peterson, the star of the show before going pro at the end of last season.

The better the 10 other offensive starters play, the less pressure there will be on their rookie quarterback. If Bradford-Halzle-Nichol can deliver, the Sooners' offense should be potent.

"They'll only keep getting better," Stoops said of the trio. "I think the biggest factor is the players around them need to play better. We have so many guys back, that if they'll step it up, it'll make it easier for those quarterbacks."

DEFENSE

The Sooners' entire senior class last season consisted of only eight scholarship players, but they lost five quality starters in defensive ends Larry Birdine, C.J. Ah You and Calvin Thibodeaux, plus linebackers Rufus Alexander and Zach Latimer.

Also gone is junior defensive tackle Carl Pendleton, who gave up football to raise his 10-year-old brother, Kierstan, and attend graduate school.

Defensive end no doubt is an area of concern, but seniors Alonzo Dotson and John Williams are ready to step into full-time roles.

Dotson learned a lesson not only as

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Mike Reed, LB

Usually the Sooners are known for a high school headliner, but in the class of 2007, it's the nation's No. 2 junior college prospect in the country leading the way. Five-star Marysville (Calif.) Yuba Community College linebacker Mike Reed is a 6-4, 245-pounder who brings deceptive speed and physicality to the position that Sooners fans are used to. Reed should figure into the mix early in Norman. He was also an early graduate and competed in spring ball.

Frank Alexander, DE

The Sooners are ecstatic about getting Alexander away from the SEC schools and out of Baton Rouge. OU has had some great success with players from Louisiana in the past and they hope that track record carries over with Alexander. The Sooners need depth at defensive end and Alexander could play a key role as a reserve early in his career.

Keith Nichol, QB

With Paul Thompson gone, the quarterback position is wide open at Oklahoma and Nichol, a former Michigan State commitment that switched late to the Sooners, was able to go through spring drills and compete for the starting spot. Even if he doesn't earn the job as a true freshman, the Sooner coaches are excited about his potential to be a multi-year starter.

THE SLEEPER

Londell Taylor, WR

At one point late in the process it looked like Taylor was heading to North Carolina or Tulsa. The Tar Heels and Golden Hurricane had offered him a scholarship and after arriving back from a visit to Chapel Hill, he stopped off and met with the Sooner coaches. An offer was extended and hours later he was heading to Norman as an official OU commitment. At 6-3, 213, the Sooner coaches believe if he had been playing somewhere in Texas that he would have had double-digit offers.

Committments	21
Average Stars	3.43
★★★★★	1
★★★★☆	8
★★★☆☆	11
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	72
National Rank: 14	Big 12: 3

2008 NEEDS

The Sooners always like to sign a class full at almost every position, and offensive line has always been a position of concern in Norman. So don't be surprised if you see them stock up there in the future. Also look for the next great Oklahoma running back to be a priority now that Adrian Peterson has bolted to the NFL.

— Jeremy Crabtree, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
ALEXANDER, Frank	DE	6-5, 227	★★★★	Baton Rouge, LA	Southern Lab
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 10 overall prospect in Louisiana. ... No. 8 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Had 76 tackles and 13 sacks as a senior. ... First-team All-State.					
ANERSON, David	DE	6-5, 220	★★	Lawton, OK	MacArthur
First-team All-State. ... Had 82 tackles and 11 sacks as a senior. ... All-District in basketball.					
BOX, Austin	LB	6-3, 215	★★★★	Enid, OK	Enid
Rivals.com's No. 46 prospect nationally. ... No. 3 outside linebacker nationally. ... No. 1 prospect in Oklahoma. ... Enrolled in January. ... Played quarterback, running back, wide receiver and safety. ... Had 71 tackles and three interceptions as a senior.					
BROYLES, Ryan	DB	6-0, 170	★★★★	Norman, OK	Norman
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 4 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 11 cornerback nationally. ... Had 44 catches for 908 yards and eight scores as a senior. ... Averaged 20.6 yards per catch. ... Had 73 tackles and six interceptions.					
BUMPUS, Jontae	DE	6-4, 225	★★★	Muskogee, OK	Muskogee
Rivals.com's No. 8 prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 30 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Had 92 tackles and nine sacks as a senior. ... District Defensive Lineman of the Year.					
COOKE, Kody	OL	6-4, 285	★★★	Enid, OK	Enid
Rivals.com's No. 14 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 54 offensive guard nationally. ... Enrolled in January. ... District co-offensive Lineman of the Year.					
FLEMING, Jamell	DB	5-10, 187	★★★★	Arlington, TX	Seguin
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 35 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 12 cornerback nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Second-team All-State. ... Had 481 receiving yards and four touchdowns as a senior.					
HANNAN, Jason	OL	6-4, 277	★★★★	Waxahachie, TX	
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No 23 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 1 center nationally. ... Never allowed a sack in three seasons.					
JACKSON, Desmond	DB	5-11, 187	★★★★	Seguin, TX	Seguin
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 39 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 14 safety nationally. ... Had 86 tackles and three interceptions as a senior. ... Also standout kick and punt returner with five special teams touchdowns.					
LEWIS, Travis	LB	6-1, 213	★★★★	San Antonio, TX	Lee
Rivals.com's No. 37 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 20 outside linebacker natioanly. ... All-Area and All-Metro. ... Rushed for 1,436 yards and nine touchdowns as a senior.					
LOADHOLT, Phil	OL	6-9, 360	★★★★	Garden City, KS	Garden City CC
Rivals.com's No. 20 overall junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... Two-time junior college All-American. ... Conference Lineman of the Year. ... Had 113 tackles and 93 pancake blocks.					
NICHOL, Keith	QB	6-2, 195	★★★	Lowell, MI	MacArthur
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 4 overall prospect in Michigan. ... No. 6 dual-threat quarterback nationally. ... Enrolled in January. ... Passed for 2,225 yards and 31 touchdowns as a senior. ... Rushed for 1,075 yards and 19 touchdowns. ... Had two interceptions as a cornerback.					
NIX, Jordan	DT	6-3, 260	★★★	Lawton, OK	Lawton
Signed with Oklahoma a week after signing day. ... Runs 40-yard dash in 4.85 seconds.					
PROCTOR, Sam	ATH	6-0, 202	★★★	Pearland, TX	Pearland
Rivals.com's No. 44 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 35 athlete nationally. ... Rushed for 1,658 yards and 19 touchdowns as a senior. ... Passed for 456 yards and four touchdowns.					
REED, Mike	LB	6-4, 245	★★★★★	Marysville, CA	Yuba CC
Rivals.com's No. 2 overall junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... Played on conference and district championship team. ... Conference MVP. ... Had school record 90 tackles as a senior.					
STEPHENSON, Donald	OL	6-4, 282	★★★	Blue Springs, MO	
Rivals.com's No. 7 prospect in Missouri. ... No. 34 offensive tackle nationally ... Played only three games as a senior due to broken toe. ... All-League as a junior.					
STEVENS, Jimmy	K	5-6, 170	★★★	Oklahoma City, OK	Heritage Hall
Rivals.com's No. 13 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 13 kicker nationally. ... Set national record with 50 career field goals. ... Made 125 consecutive extra points.					
STRADFORD, Tyler	WR	6-2, 175	★★★	New Orleans, LA	O.P. Walker
Rivals.com's No. 23 overall prospect in Louisiana. ... No. 56 wide receiver nationally. ... Had 27 catches for 483 yards and six touchdowns as a senior. ... Had six interceptions as cornerback and safety.					
TAYLOR, Londell	WR	6-3, 213	★★★	Vian, OK	Vian
Had 1,171 receiving yards and 16 touchdowns as a senior. ... Had nine interceptions and four scores on defense. ... All-State. ... District co-Offensive Player of the Year.					
WILLIAMS, Alex	OL	6-5, 288	★★★	New Orleans, LA	O.P. Walker
Rivals.com's No. 24 overall prospect in Louisiana. ... No. 54 offensive tackle nationally. ... Allowed two sacks in high school career. ... All-State in basketball as a junior.					
WILSON, Corey	WR	6-0, 184	★★★	Carrollton, TX	Creekview
Rivals.com's No. 43 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 34 wide receiver nationally. ... Had 343 receiving yards and three touchdowns as a senior. ... Rushed for 234 yards.					

SOONERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
	FRANK ALEXANDER	DE	6-5	227	Fr	Baton Rouge, LA
84	RYAN ALLGOOD	TE	6-4	245	Fr	Grove
	DAVID ANDERSON	DE	6-5	220	Fr	Lawton
20	ROCKY ANDERSON	RB	5-11	187	Fr	Concordia, KS
16	LEWIS BAKER	LB	6-2	210	Sr	Carrollton, TX
44	JEREMY BEAL	DE	6-4	254	Fr	Carrollton, TX
75	CHASE BEELER	OL	6-3	276	So	Jenks
97	CORY BENNETT	DT	6-2	278	Jr	San Antonio, TX
78	BILLY BLACKARD	DT	6-3	275	So	Claremore
	RYAN BROYLES	WR	6-0	170	Fr	Norman
27	GARRETT BOTHUN	WR	5-9	173	Sr	Rowlett, TX
26	BRETT BOWERS	DB	6-0	203	Jr	Jacksonville, FL
7	AUSTIN BOX	LB	6-3	215	Fr	Enid
14	SAM BRADFORD	QB	6-5	197	Fr	Oklahoma City
70	CORY BRANDON	OL	6-7	271	Fr	Corsicana, TX
76	BRANNDON BRAXTON	OL	6-6	312	Jr	Youngstown, OH
46	T.C. BREAD	LB	6-3	225	Fr	Norman
29	CHRIS BROWN	RB	5-10	190	So	Alexandria, LA
	JONTE BUMPUS	DE	6-4	225	Fr	Muskogee
8	BRANDON CALEB	WR	6-1	196	So	Atlanta, GA
18	CORTNEY CARTER	DB	5-10	180	Jr	Dallas, TX
20	QUINTON CARTER	DB	6-1	190	So	Las Vegas, NV
84	QUENTIN CHANEY	WR	6-4	213	Jr	Tulsa
34	MATT CLAPP	FB	6-2	244	Jr	Phoenix, AZ
22	KEENAN CLAYTON	DB	6-1	210	So	Sulphur Springs, TX
31	MICHAEL COHEN	P	6-0	205	Sr	Houston, TX
90	STEVEN COLEMAN	DT	6-4	299	Sr	Dallas, TX
64	KODY COOKE	OL	6-4	285	Fr	Enid
50	JON COOPER	OL	6-2	285	Jr	Fort Collins, CO
43	CHRIS CROSLIN	DB	6-0	205	Fr	Noble
39	COLLIN COX	WR	6-2	187	So	Rowlett, TX
48	BRANDON CROW	LB	6-1	220	Fr	Comanche
95	ALAN DAVIS	DE	6-2	253	Jr	Colleyville, TX
91	ALONZO DOTSON	DE	6-3	252	Sr	Alief, TX
83	BRODY ELDRIDGE	TE	6-5	258	So	La Cygne, KS
33	AUSTON ENGLISH	DE	6-3	257	So	Canadian, TX
19	JOE JON FINLEY	TE	6-6	260	Sr	Arlington, TX
	JAMELL FLEMING	DB	5-10	187	Fr	Arlington, TX
15	DOMINIQUE FRANKS	DB	5-11	183	Fr	Tulsa
41	DEREK GOVE	RB	5-9	185	Fr	Carrollton, TX
96	DeMARCUS GRANGER	DT	6-3	300	So	Dallas, TX
18	JERMAINE GRESHAM	TE	6-6	250	So	Ardmore
21	JACOB GUTIERREZ	RB	5-6	187	Sr	San Antonio, TX
15	JOEY HALZLE	QB	6-3	198	Jr	Huntington Beach, CA
	JASON HANNAN	OL	6-4	277	Fr	Waxahachie, TX
5	NIC HARRIS	DB	6-3	226	Jr	Alexandria, LA
10	GARRETT HARTLEY	K	5-9	198	Sr	Southlake, TX
13	MICHAEL HAYES	DB	5-10	190	Fr	Altus
57	BROCK HESSE	LB	5-10	204	So	Mesquite, TX
11	LENDY HOLMES	DB	6-1	196	Jr	Dallas, TX
59	ZACH HOWARD	OL	6-0	250	Fr	Shawnee
63	NOAH HUGHEY	OL	6-3	270	So	El Reno
9	JUAQUIN IGLESIAS	WR	6-1	201	Jr	Killeen, TX
2	BRIAN JACKSON	DB	6-1	190	So	De Soto, TX
	DESMOND JACKSON	DB	5-11	187	Fr	Seguin, TX
36	JOHNNIE JAMES	DB	6-1	190	Fr	Jenks
62	TOLA JIMOH	DE	6-0	228	So	Tulsa
55	KYLE JOHNSON	DS	6-3	230	Jr	Konawa
1	MANUEL JOHNSON	WR	5-11	177	Jr	Gilmer, TX
85	TIM JOHNSON	DE	6-5	265	Jr	Homewood, IL
4	MALCOLM KELLY	WR	6-4	217	Jr	Longview, TX
13	MIKE KNALL	P	5-9	178	Jr	Scottsdale, AZ
	TRAVIS LEWIS	LB	6-1	213	Fr	San Antonio, TX
79	PHIL LOADHOLT	OL	6-9	360	Jr	Fountain, CO
40	CURTIS LOFTON	LB	6-0	235	Jr	Kingfisher
94	PRYCE MACON	DE	6-1	260	Fr	Corpus Christi, TX
17	MOSSIS MADU	RB	5-11	190	Fr	Norman
93	GERALD McCOY	DT	6-4	289	Fr	Oklahoma City
16	HAYS McEACHERN	QB	5-11	180	Jr	Austin, TX
88	ERIC MENSIK	TE	6-5	246	Fr	Rosenberg, TX
89	CORDERO MOORE	DT	6-2	297	So	Mesquite, TX
77	SHERRONE MOORE	OL	6-3	297	Sr	Derby, KS
37	MATTHEW MORELAND	K	6-1	195	Fr	Tulsa
7	DeMARCO MURRAY	RB	6-0	191	Fr	Las Vegas, NV
4	JONATHAN NELSON	DB	5-11	176	Fr	Mansfield, TX
6	KEITH NICHOL	QB	6-2	195	Fr	Lowell, MI
5	JOHN NIMMO	QB	6-1	190	Fr	Ponca City
23	ALLEN PATRICK	RB	6-0	191	Sr	Conway, SC
51	DEMARRIO PLEASANT	LB	6-2	231	Sr	Lewisville, TX
49	IAN PLEASANT	FB	5-10	215	Sr	Alexandria, VA
	SAM PROCTOR	ATH	6-0	202	Fr	Pearland, TX
38	MIKE REED	LB	6-4	245	Jr	Vero Beach, FL
8	RYAN REYNOLDS	LB	6-1	237	So	Las Vegas, NV
72	GEORGE ROBINSON	OL	6-5	330	Jr	Atlanta, GA
30	LAMONT ROBINSON	LB	6-0	227	So	Salem, NJ
52	DEREK SHAW	DS	6-1	210	So	Sand Springs
74	BRIAN SIMMONS	OL	6-4	293	So	Raleigh, NC
3	REGGIE SMITH	DB	6-1	197	Jr	Edmond
	DONALD STEPHENSON	OL	6-4	282	Fr	Blue Springs, MO
	JIMMY STEVENS	K	5-6	170	Fr	Oklahoma City
	TYLER STRADFORD	WR	6-2	175	Fr	New Orleans, LA
81	FRED STRONG	WR	6-1	197	Jr	Austin, TX
54	TOMMY TAGGART	DT	6-3	285	Jr	Euless, TX
86	ADRIAN TAYLOR	DT	6-4	293	Fr	Mansfield, TX
	LONDELL TAYLOR	ATH	6-3	213	Fr	Vian
80	ADRON TENNELL	WR	6-4	184	So	Irving, TX
73	BRANDON WALKER	OL	6-3	306	Jr	Detroit, MI
24	MARCUS WALKER	DB	5-11	192	Sr	Waco, TX
14	CARTER WHITSON	WR	5-11	190	So	Shawnee
	ALEX WILLIAMS	OL	6-5	288	Fr	New Orleans, LA
41	DARIEN WILLIAMS	DB	6-0	197	Sr	Mesquite, TX
98	JOHN WILLIAMS	DE	6-5	249	Sr	Houston, TX
71	TRENT WILLIAMS	OL	6-5	321	So	Longview, TX
	COREY WILSON	WR	6-0	184	Fr	Carrollton, TX
25	D.J. WOLFE	DB	6-0	196	Sr	Lawton

NOTEBOOK

The Sooners played last season without player names on the backs of their jerseys. The names returned at the annual Red-White spring game, much to the delight of 20,000-plus fans.

Coach **Bob Stoops** said he would probably keep player names on the jerseys, as long as his team keeps "team" ahead of "self."

"I asked them, can they remain unselfish about it and not worry about whose name is on the back and worry more about (the name) on the front?" Stoops said. "If they continue to act that way, maybe we'll keep 'em that way."

- The Sooners went before the NCAA's Committee on Infractions in April to answer charges of major rules violations involving players' employment at a local car dealership, where at least three players were paid for work they did not do.

OU did not contest allegations against quarterback Rhett Bomar, lineman J.D. Quinn and wide receiver Jermaine Hardison, all of whom were kicked off the team before last season.

- The Sooners consistently have been incredibly balanced offensively. They missed being perfectly balanced last season by 202 yards with 2,682 yards passing and 2,480 yards rushing. In 2005, they missed it by just one yard with 2,131 passing and 2,130 rushing. The 2003 offense was separated by 160 yards.
- With the departure of senior quarterback Paul Thompson, the Sooners return just .05 percent of their passing yards from a year ago. Junior **Joey Halzle** completed one of two passes for 15 yards last season.
- Though the Sooners scour the nation for talent, 42 players on their roster hail from Texas and 32 are from Oklahoma. As for other recruiting hotbeds, Halzle is the only player from California, **Branndon Braxton** is the lone player from Ohio and **Brett Bowers** and **Mike Reed** are the only players from Florida.
- OU has sold out all 49 home games since Stoops took charge in 1999 and has won 47 of those games, the only losses being against Oklahoma State (16-13) in 2001 and to TCU (17-10) in 2005.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
P. Thompson	14	142.45	204	336	11	60.7	2667	22	73	190.5
J. Halzle	2	113.00	1	2	0	50.0	15	0	15	7.5

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
A. Peterson	7	188	1071	59	1012	5.4	12	53	144.6
A. Patrick	12	169	789	28	761	4.5	4	65	63.4
C. Brown	5	70	355	12	343	4.9	6	40	68.6

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
M. Kelly	14	62	993	16.0	10	73	70.9
J. Iglesias	14	41	514	12.5	2	37	36.7
M. Johnson	12	36	378	10.5	3	32	31.5

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: R. Alexander 118, Z. Latimer 84, N. Harris 68
Interceptions: N. Harris 4, Z. Latimer 3, R. Smith 3, M. Walker 3
Sacks: C.J. Ah You 4, R. Alexander 3.5, L. Birdine 3, S. Coleman 3
Tackles for loss: R. Alexander 12, Z. Latimer 10, C.J. Ah You 8.5

Results

(11-3, 7-1)

W	UAB	24-17
W	WASHINGTON	37-20
L	at Oregon	33-34
W	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	59-0
L	TEXAS	10-28
W	IOWA STATE	34-9
W	COLORADO	24-3
W	at Missouri	26-10
W	at Texas A&M	17-16
W	TEXAS TECH	34-24
W	at Baylor	36-10
W	at Oklahoma State	27-21
W	NEBRASKA	21-7
	Fiesta Bowl	
L	vs. Boise State	OT 42-43

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

a backup, but also by sitting out the 2005 season due to academic troubles. "I learned how to step up and be a man," Dotson said. "You can't take advantage of things, take things for granted. It makes you appreciate the game."

Cory Bennett and Steven Coleman are experienced tackles, while heralded youngsters DeMarcus Granger, a sophomore, and redshirt freshman Gerald McCoy figure to see significant time.

Middle linebacker has long been the key defensive position at OU. That role now belongs to Mike Reed, unless sophomore Ryan Reynolds can avoid injury and pass Reed on the depth chart in camp. Junior Curtis Lofton will attempt to replace Alexander, a fan favorite, at weakside linebacker. Lewis Baker and Demarrio Pleasant will play strongside linebacker.

The secondary returns talented and experienced players, seven of whom started at one time or another last season.

Reggie Smith and Marcus Walker are as solid as they come at cornerback. Resilient D.J. Wolfe and Nic Harris are the starting safeties. Darien Williams and Lendy Holmes are backups who started 11 games last season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Lou Groza Award finalist Garrett Hartley is back for his senior season.

Hartley converted 19 of 20 field goal attempts last season, with his lone miss being a blocked 44-yard attempt at Oregon on the game's final play. His .950 field-goal percentage set a single-season school record and led the nation among kickers with more than 10 attempts. He also had 31 touchbacks on 78 kickoffs.

Despite all these lofty numbers, Hartley was second-team All-Big 12 behind Colorado's Mason Crosby.

The Sooners return a pair of punters in Michael Cohen (41.0-yard average on 51 punts) and short-field specialist Mike Knall, who had nine of his 11 punts downed inside the 20 with only one touchback.

There are multiple candidates as

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

CB Reggie Smith

An all-around athlete, Smith flip-flopped from cornerback to safety last season. He's back at corner to open '07, but OU's depth at corner makes it likely Smith will move around in the secondary. ... Smith has game-breaking ability on defense and special teams. Could also excel offensively if needed. ... Depending on what transpires this season, Smith and wide receiver Malcolm Kelly — both juniors — figure to consider entering the NFL draft.

EMERGING STAR

RB DeMarco Murray

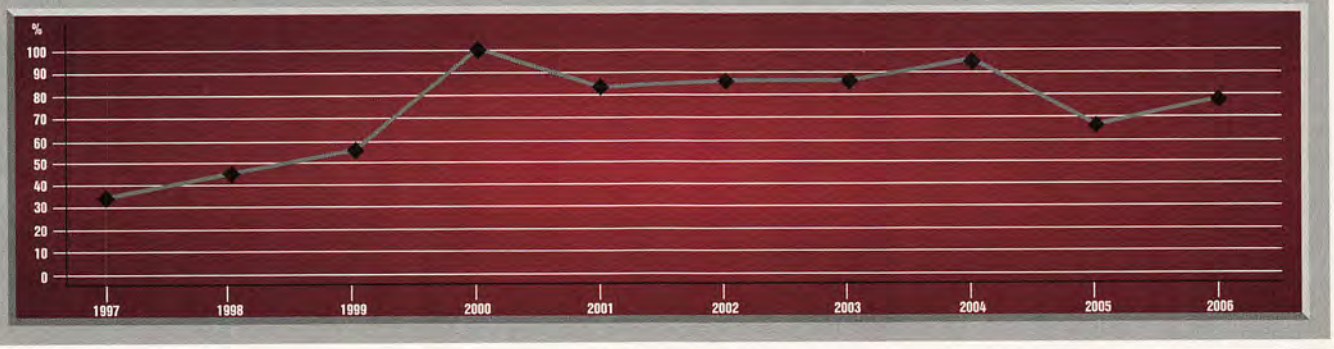
This redshirt freshman from Las Vegas stole the show during spring practice, gaining 327 yards and scoring four touchdowns on just 29 carries (11.3 per rush) in three scrimmages. ... A lethal combination of speed and elusiveness, he also has ability to catch the ball. ... Was slowed by a lingering turf toe injury last fall, which could be a blessing in disguise because it allowed him to redshirt. ... Has a chance to be OU's version of Reggie Bush, a versatile threat who might play a role as a return specialist.

TOP NEWCOMER

LT Phil Loadholt

This junior college transfer from Garden City (Kan.) Community College is a load at 6-8, 350 pounds, literally a big addition for the Sooners, who needed to replace All-Big 12 offensive lineman Chris Messner. ... A remarkable athlete, the agile Loadholt was runner-up for Colorado's Mr. Basketball while at Fountain-Fort Carson High School in Fort Carson, where he played defensive tackle and tight end in football. ... This position takes on even greater importance as the blind-side guardian of OU's inexperienced quarterback.

Oklahoma's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

ALLEN PATRICK

PHOTO BY NICK DOAN/TCON SM

Replacing a Legend Won't Be a Problem

Adrian Peterson is one of the greatest running backs in Oklahoma's storied history.

In just 32 career games, he finished with 4,045 yards rushing and is No. 3 on the school's all-time rushing list, 73 yards behind leader and 1978 Heisman Trophy winner Billy Sims.

Peterson is the only freshman to finish second for the Heisman.

Interesting, though, that when Peterson played, the Sooners went 23-8. Without him, they went 8-0, all in Big 12 Conference play.

Is OU better off without Peterson?

Such blasphemy is not to discredit Peterson, but rather to credit teammates who shared the same backfield and other teammates who picked up the slack.

Heading that group is senior Allen Patrick, who arrived as a junior college transfer hoping to crack the lineup in the defensive backfield.

Running backs coach Cale Gundy noticed Patrick was having trouble grasping the intricacies of the defense. Knowing Patrick had played running back at Conway (S.C.) High School, Gundy suggested a move to offense.

Patrick responded with 897 yards rushing yards in two seasons. In addition to carrying the heavy burden as Peterson's replacement, Patrick carried a heavy load.

In four straight starts in the middle of last season, Patrick averaged 31.5 carries and 152 yards per game.

Though Peterson possessed freakish athleticism, Patrick wasn't far behind when it came to agility.

In fact, Gundy has said Patrick was the only player ever to test better than Peterson. After the 2005 Holiday Bowl, Patrick had a 40-inch vertical jump to Peterson's 39 inches, and Patrick had a standing broad jump of 10 feet, 10 inches, one inch better than Peterson.

"It still bothers Adrian to this day," Gundy said.

Though blessed with 4.4 speed in the 40-yard dash, Patrick isn't afraid of contact.

"He will attack you the same way Adrian will," Gundy said.

If the 6-0, 191-pound Patrick can stay healthy, Gundy predicted he could lead the Big 12 in rushing this season.

Then again, Patrick has three capable backups nipping at his heels in sophomore Chris Brown and redshirt freshmen DeMarco Murray and Mossis Madu.

"They're outstanding, man. They've got a lot of talent," Patrick said of his backups.

Such is life as an OU running back. Those who slow down or get hurt might be fighting for a job. Just ask Peterson.

return specialists, including Juaquin Iglesias, Manuel Johnson, Reggie Smith and possibly redshirt freshman DeMarco Murray.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

This season brings nothing but Division I-A opponents, as well as seven games against bowl teams from last season. Included are a couple of familiar faces in upstart in-state foe Tulsa and fellow perennial power Miami, which visits Norman for the first time since 1985.

The Hurricanes are 3-2 all-time against the Sooners, having won the past three meetings. The last time these teams met was in the Orange Bowl for the 1987 national title with Miami winning 20-14.

OU will complete the home-and-home series by playing at Miami in 2009.

After playing their first three games at home, the Sooners hit the road for three straight, highlighted by the Red River Shootout against rival Texas at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas on Oct. 6.

The regular season ends with bedlam against in-state rival Oklahoma State on Thanksgiving weekend.

— John Rohde

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 8	MIAMI
Sept. 15	UTAH STATE
Sept. 21	at Tulsa
Sept. 29	at Colorado
Oct. 6	(Dallas) Texas
Oct. 13	MISSOURI
Oct. 20	at Iowa State
Nov. 3	TEXAS A&M
Nov. 10	BAYLOR
Nov. 17	at Texas Tech
Nov. 24	OKLAHOMA STATE

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TCU

Mid-American Conference
Akron
Kent State
Miami
Ohio

Georgia State

Sun Belt Conference
Troy

Conference USA
East Carolina
Houston
Marshall
SMU
Southern Miss
Tulane
UAB
UCF
UTEP

Meineke Car Care Bowl
Orange Bowl

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AT A GLANCE

2006

7-6 overall, 3-5 Big 12 (T-5th, South)

COACH

Mike Gundy — At Oklahoma State and overall: 11-13, 2 years

RETURNING STARTERS

16; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Bobby Reid, RB Dantrell Savage, WR Adarius Bowman, TE Brandon Pettigrew, DE Nathan Peterson, LB Patrick Lavine, CB/RS Perrish Cox, SS Andre Sexton

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Adarius Bowman — big, strong and fast — may be this year's Calvin Johnson. Dantrell Savage's jackrabbit running style has drawn comparisons to Barry Sanders. Bobby Reid may be emerging as a leader. All four DBs and all three LBs return from last year's big-play defense.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Can the defense — especially the line — pull its weight? A secondary target to Adarius Bowman hasn't stepped up yet. Depth at offensive line is a concern. The season opener is at, gulp, Georgia. Big 12 trips are to Nebraska, Texas A&M and Oklahoma.

KEY LOSSES

WR D'Juan Woods, OL Corey Hilliard, OL Kurt Seifried, RB Mike Hamilton, DL Ryan McBean, DL Larry Brown, DL Victor DeGrate, DL Darnell Smith

OVERVIEW

There is positive momentum around the program, and this has the makings of a breakthrough year for the Cowboys, who will have one of the most electric offenses in the country. Expect shootouts. Now, OSU has to win more of them at the end.

These Cowboys Won't Be Slowpokes on Offense

There were times last season when Oklahoma State couldn't be stopped. And there were times when the Cowboys just couldn't get going.

Such is life for a 7-6 team.

Still, despite so many inconsistencies, the 2006 campaign was a significant step forward for Mike Gundy's second team ... and it portends bigger things for 2007.

Just 4-7 in 2005, OSU ranked near the bottom of most NCAA's statistical categories. Last year's squad was better across the board, but particularly so on offense.

Seven starters are back on offense, including an exciting group of skill players: quarterback Bobby Reid, wideout Adarius Bowman, running backs Dantrell Savage and Keith Toston and tight end Brandon Pettigrew.

Seven starters return on defense and every specialist is back.

That's good news for a team that last season lost four games on the final play — a perfect indicator of talent offset by youth. It also says sthe Cowboys are to a breakthrough.

Depth is better at every position. The talent is also improved, evidenced by back-to-back recruiting classes that, for the first time since such rankings have been kept, were ranked by some among the nation's Top 25.

"This is as good of a class as we have had in a long time," Gundy said. "They can take this team to the next level. We keep chipping away every single year."

That chipping away is easier because of the $240 million gusher of cash from OSU alum and Texas oil magnate Boone Pickens is still flowing.

The south side of Pickens Stadium is complete, and work continues on the west end zone structure that will, by 2008, turn what was three years ago a rickety and dilapidated facility into one of the Big 12's finest.

Ground has also been broken on an unprecedented state-of-the-art athletic village for several sports and will include a $50 million indoor practice facility, $20 million of which came in January from Tulsa oilman Sherman Smith.

"The excitement in Stillwater," Gundy said, "is as high as it has ever been."

OFFENSE

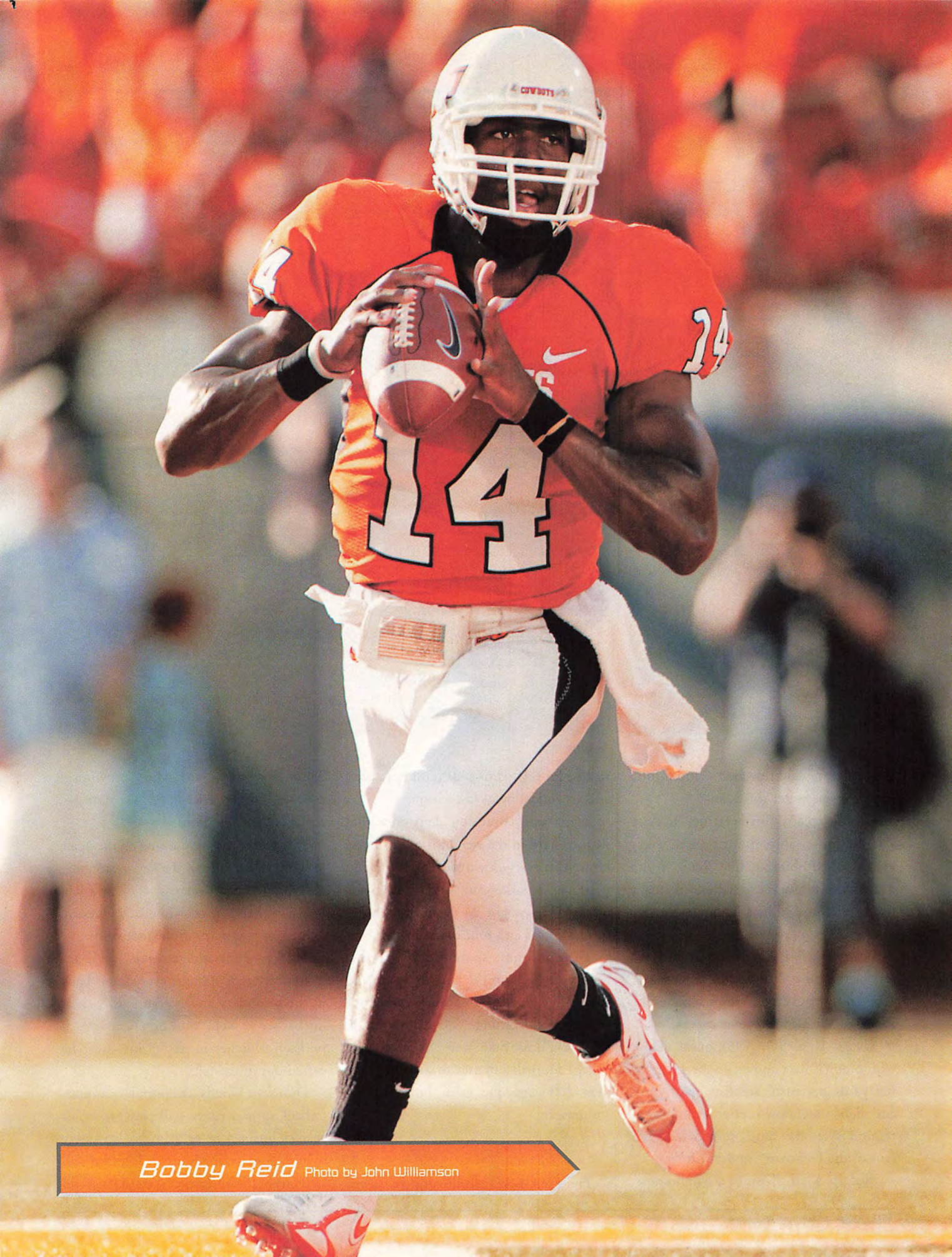
Oklahoma State's big-play trio of quarterback Bobby Reid, wide receiver Adarius Bowman and running back Dantrell Savage has been compared with the record-breaking 1988 trio of quarterback Mike Gundy, wideout Hart Lee Dykes and tailback supreme Barry Sanders.

"We feel good about our offense," Gundy said.

"I'm not going to extend myself much, but I'm fairly confident that we're going to score some points. We have several guys that can make some plays."

Reid broke out of a 2005 funk to post 2,266 yards passing, 500 yards rushing, 29 total touchdowns and college football's 16th-best pass efficiency rating. Reid, a 6-3, 235-pound junior, could be on the verge of an All-Big 12 type of season.

"I think he was an All-Big 12 type of



Bobby Reid Photo by John Williamson

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 208.0 ypg rushing (1st in Big 12/7th in NCAA), 201.8 ypg passing (7th/54th), 409.8 ypg total offense (4th/16th), 35.2 ppg (2nd/7th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Bobby Reid*	Jr.	Was 16th nationally in passing efficiency last season.	Zac Robinson, So.
RB	Dantrell Savage*	Sr.	Ran for at least 100 yards in five of OSU's last seven games.	Keith Toston, So.
WR	Adarius Bowman*	Sr.	Who can forget his 300-yard receiving day vs. Kansas?	Seth Newton, Jr.
WR	Tommy Devereaux	Sr.	With added muscle, could be on the verge of breakout.	Artrell Woods, So.
WR	Anthony Parks	Jr.	Needs to be productive underneath to help Bowman deep.	Jeremy Broadway, So.
TE	Brandon Pettigrew*	Jr.	Emerged late last season as a reliable big-play receiver.	Justin Waller, Jr.
LT	Russell Okung*	So.	Started the final eight games as a true freshman at RT.	Brady Bond, So.
LG	Andrew Lewis	So.	Son of former Texas A&M standout OL Steve Lewis.	Michael Booker, Fr.
C	David Washington*	Jr.	Has started 24 straight games; grades consistently well.	Andrew Lawrence So.
RG	Steve Denning	Jr.	2006 backup after transferring from NW Mississippi CC.	Noah Franklin, So.
RT	David Koenig*	Jr.	Has made 24 consecutive starts (27 total) at left guard.	Jacob Secrest, Fr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 146.7 ypg rushing (8th in Big 12/72nd in NCAA), 217.4 ypg passing (8th/84th), 364.1 total defense (9th/89th), 25.6 ppg (10th/82nd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Marque Fountain	Sr.	Made 35 tackles, with 13 for loss and 4.5 sacks last year.	Derek Burton, So.
DT	Jeray Chatham	Jr.	Has played in 21 career games, but will be pushed for time.	Tonga Tea, Jr.
DT	Maurice Cummings	Sr.	Has appeared in 22 games as a backup.	Jonathan Lewis, So.
DE	Nathan Peterson	Sr.	Fierce pass rusher may finally be back from knee injuries.	Rodrick Johnson, Jr.*
LB	Jeremy Nethon*	Sr.	Made 51 tackles last season after moving from safety.	Chris Collins, So.
LB	Donovan Woods*	Sr.	Moves once more after starting at QB, SS and FS.	Marcus Brown, Jr.
LB	Patrick Lavine*	So.	Ranked second with 70 tackles last season (nine for loss).	Alex Odiari, Jr.
CB	Martel Van Zant*	Sr.	Fourth on the team with 67 tackles, first with two INTs.	T.J. Bell, Jr.
CB	Jacob Lacey*	Jr.	Had problems in man coverage, but never backed down.	Perrish Cox, So.
SS	Andre Sexton*	So.	Led team with 79 tackles, three forced fumbles last season.	Clint Coe, Sr.
FS	Ricky Price	Jr.	Former WR moved to defense and had a breakout spring.	Quinton Moore, Jr.

*Returning starter

guy last year," said Bowman. "And I think he'll do even better this year."

Gundy plans on getting backup Zac Robinson into the action in every game, too. Robinson, like Reid, is also a dual threat, so the coaches will really have some possibilities if they want two quarterbacks on the field.

Bowman, a 6-4, 220-pound senior, is the star of the show. He torched defenses for 19.7 yards per catch last season, accounting for 1,181 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Savage is a 5-9, 195-pound senior whose quicksilver moves — he averaged 6.5 yards per rush, amassing 820 yards and eight touchdowns after an injury — remind even the most devoted Sanders fans of the Heisman Trophy winner.

Backup Keith Toston, a sophomore, rushed for 631 yards (6.0 yards per carry) and six touchdowns last season.

Tight end Brandon Pettigrew has worked hard in the weight room to make himself an every-down player who can do whatever is asked in OSU's balanced offense. He caught 24 passes last season for 310 yards and four touchdowns.

Three full-time starters and two part-timers are back on the line for an offense that ranked seventh nationally in both scoring and rushing, and 16th overall. OSU and Boise State were the only major college football offenses to average more than 200 yards per game both rushing and passing.

DEFENSE

There's a new coordinator in town. Tim Beckman — who previously coached cornerbacks at Ohio State — replaces Vance Bedford.

"We will try to put pressure on the quarterback, which I feel is the key to stopping today's offenses," Beckman said. "We will be sound and play with an aggressive attitude as we swarm to the football."

He'll have the athletes to do just that.

Of last year's starters, everyone is back in the secondary and everyone is back at linebacker ... well, kind of. A couple of position switches in the spring must be sorted out in the fall.

Donovan Woods, the popular ex-quarterback turned safety, will play his senior year at linebacker, or a linebacker-safety hybrid. And senior Rodrick Johnson will step out of his linebacker spot to try to fill

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Dez Bryant, WR

Arguably one of the nation's most talented incoming receivers, Bryant is well ahead of the game compared to other freshman. His ball skills and ability to make tough catches look easy make him one of the more popular picks for early playing time at Oklahoma State.

Richetti Jones, DE

One of the nation's top pass rushers in high school, Jones suffered an injury as a senior at Dallas Lincoln. If he can get healthy, Jones could see the field this season. Jones is quick off the ball and has a nose for getting to the quarterback.

William Cole, WR

There may not have been a prospect that had a more successful senior season than Cole. As a quarterback, he lped his team to the state championship for the first time in school history. His elusiveness and ability to turn a small hole into a long touchdown make him a candidate to contribute on special teams immediately.

THE SLEEPER

Jamie Blatnick, DE

No one ever questioned the Celina, Texas star's size and ability. The dilemma is which position he should play. Though he could be a run-stopping defensive end, Blatnick could move inside as a defensive tackle or even an offensive guard. Those options make Blatnick an exciting one to watch in Stillwater.

Committments	22
Average Stars	3.09
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	4
★★★☆☆	16
★★☆☆☆	2
Total Stars	68
National Rank: 28	Big 12: 4

2008 NEEDS

Oklahoma State will address several positions that they didn't focus on in the 2007 class. One of those is quarterback and another could be kicker. Along the offensive line, look for the Cowboys to again take several prospects — with a focus on the tackle position. Look for more additions to the defensive line as well.

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
ALEXANDER, Kenny	LB	6-1, 215	★★★	McKinney, TX	North
Rivals.com's No. 58 outside linebacker nationally. ... Enrolled in January. ... Had 78 tackles, four sacks and four interceptions as a senior. ... Two-time All-District.					
ANYIAM, Hubert	WR	6-0, 163	★★★	Garland, TX	North Garland
Rivals.com's No. 47 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 35 wide receiver nationally. ... Caught 60 passes for 1,058 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior. ... Rushed for 250 yards. ... Caught 48 passes for 990 yards and 10 touchdowns as a junior.					
BLATNICK, Jamie	DE	6-3, 245	★★	Celina, TX	Celina
Two-time All-State, once in Class 2A and again in Class 3A. ... Had 20 sacks as a senior. ... Allowed one sack as an offensive lineman. ... District MVP. ... Played on state championship team.					
BRYANT, Dez	WR	6-1, 195	★★★★	Lufkin, TX	Lufkin
Rivals.com's No. 54 prospect nationally. ... No. 7 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 9 wide receiver nationally. ... All-State. ... Caught 53 passes for 1,207 yards and 21 touchdowns as a senior. ... Caught 41 passes for 1,025 yards and 16 touchdowns as a junior.					
COLE, William	ATH	5-10, 165	★★★★	Cedar Hill, TX	Cedar Hill
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 14 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 14 athlete nationally. ... Rushed for almost 2,900 yards and passed for more than 1,600. ... Ran for 290 yards in state championship game.					
COOPER, Josh	WR	5-11, 166	★★★	Mustang, OK	Mustang
Rivals.com's No. 10 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... Caught 81 passes for 1,328 yards and 15 touchdowns as a senior. ... Had six interceptions.					
DAVIS, Damian	ATH	6-5, 185	★★★	Mart, TX	Mart
Rivals.com's No. 92 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 63 athlete nationally. ... Caught 56 passes for 1,082 yards with 15 touchdowns. ... Had more than 1,000 receiving yards and 10 touchdowns as a junior.					
GARNER, Grant	OL	6-3, 260	★★★	Mesquite, TX	Mesquite
Rivals.com's No. 18 center nationally. ... Second-team All-State. ... Two-time All-District.					
GLOVER, Jared	DE	6-5, 220	★★★	Bixby, OK	Bixby
Rivals.com's No. 7 overall prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 29 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Had 89 tackles and 13 sacks as a senior.					
HUNTER, Kendall	RB	5-9, 185	★★★	Tyler, TX	Tyler
Rivals.com's No. 83 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 40 running back nationally. ... Rushed for 1,200 yards and 14 touchdowns as a senior. ... Had 29 receptions for 429 yards. ... Had 3,396 career all-purpose yards and 32 touchdowns.					
JONES, Ahmad	DT	6-2, 319	★★★	Silsbee, TX	Silsbee
Rivals.com's No. 68 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 37 defensive tackle nationally. ... First-team All-State.					
JONES, Richetti	DE	6-3, 234	★★★★	Dallas, TX	Lincoln
Rivals.com's No. 69 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 9 prospect in Texas. ... No. 5 strongside defensive end nationally. ... Had 82 tackles and 12 sacks as a senior. ... Two-time first-team All-State.					
MARTINEZ, Nick	OL	6-4, 290	★★★	Floresville, TX	Floresville
Rivals.com's No. 67 offensive guard nationally. ... First-team All-District.					
MOORE, Adrian	ATH	6-0, 205	★★★	Pine Bluff, AR	White Hall
Rivals.com's No. 12 prospect in Arkansas. ... Rushed for 2,272 yards and 31 touchdowns as a quarterback as a senior. ... Passed for 489 yards. ... Had five interceptions as a defensive back.					
PRINCE, Quinton	DT	6-3, 298	★★★	Oklahoma City, OK	Heritage Hall
Rivals.com's No. 11 prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 47 defensive tackle nationally. ... Had 89 tackles, 11 sacks and two fumble recoveries as a senior.					
REED, Jacolby	DB	5-11, 165	★★★	Houston, TX	Jersey Hall
Rivals.com's No. 55 cornerback nationally. ... All-Greater Houston second team. ... Also member of track team.					
RICHARDSON, Marcus	LB	5-10, 199	★★★	Seguin, TX	Seguin
Rivals.com's No. 66 outside linebacker nationally. ... Had 143 tackles and 18 tackles for a loss as a senior. ... Had two games of 20-plus tackles. ... Second-team All-State.					
RUSH, Jonathan	OL	6-4, 268	★★★	Killeen, TX	Killeen
Rivals.com's No. 69 offensive guard nationally. ... District wrestling champion.					
TEA, Tonga	DT	6-0, 315	★★★★	Ephraim, UT	Snow College
Rivals.com's No. 31 overall junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... First team junior college All-American. ... Had 24 tackles and nine tackles for a loss last season. ... Played high school football in Anchorage, Alaska.					
THOMAS, James	DB	6-0, 169	★★★	La Marque, TX	
Rivals.com's No. 59 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 37 safety nationally. ... Had 105 tackles, three interceptions and four forced fumbles as a senior. ... Played on state championship team.					
YERRY, Marc	OL	6-4, 220	★★	Matthews, NC	Weddington
Will likely play long snapper. ... Also played tight end in high school. ... Also member of basketball team.					
YOUMAN, Wilson	TE	6-4, 240	★★★	St. Martinville, LA	
Rivals.com's No. 30 overall prospect in Louisiana. ... Played primarily on defense as a senior with 85 tackles and three forced fumbles. ... Caught seven passes in 2006.					

COWBOYS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
59	KENNY ALEXANDER	LB	6-1	215	Fr	McKinney, TX
55	ZACH ALLEN	LS	6-1	260	Jr	Edmond
23	TERRANCE ANDERSON	DB	6-0	180	So	Aldine, TX
31	BEN BAILEY	TE	6-3	225	Fr	Bixby
95	DAN BAILEY	K	6-0	205	Fr	Mustang
11	T.J. BELL	DB	6-0	185	Jr	DeSoto, TX
39	ROBERT BENGE	P	5-9	190	So	Carrollton, TX
60	BRADY BOND	OL	6-6	290	So	Garber
78	MICHAEL BOOKER	OL	6-3	310	Fr	Paris, TX
12	ADARIUS BOWMAN	WR	6-4	220	Sr	Chattanooga, TN
9	JEREMY BROADWAY	WR	6-0	195	So	Houston, TX
81	SCOTT BROUGHTON	WR	6-0	200	Sr	Huger, SC
35	MARCUS BROWN	LB	6-2	240	Jr	Hephzibah, GA
98	DEREK BURTON	DE	6-5	265	So	Muskogee
47	JEREMIAH BURTON	RB	6-1	250	Jr	Enid
81	EDDIE CAMERON	WR	5-11	175	Fr	Pompano Beach, FL
48	ZACH CARTER	RB	6-1	225	Sr	Kennesaw, GA
3	ALEX CATE	QB	6-1	190	Fr	Salt Lake City, UT
96	JERAY CHATHAM	DL	6-3	280	Jr	Houston, TX
91	UGO CHINASA	DE	6-6	245	Fr	Richardson, TX
53	SEB CLEMENTS	LB	6-1	225	Jr	Sanger, TX
25	CLINT COE	DB	6-2	195	Sr	Edmond
44	CHRIS COLLINS	LB	6-2	240	So	Texarkana, TX
80	DEMARCUS CONNER	WR	6-1	200	So	Spring, TX
16	PERRISH COX	DB	6-1	185	So	Waco, TX
32	JULIUS CROSSLIN	RB	6-0	230	Sr	Amarillo, TX
56	MAURICE CUMMINGS	DL	6-4	265	Sr	Rosebud, TX
65	STEVE DENNING	OL	6-5	300	Jr	Southaven, MS
10	TOMMY DEVEREAUX	WR	6-0	185	Sr	Duncanville, TX
18	MATT FODGE	P	6-1	195	Jr	Garland, TX
24	DERON FONTENOT	S	5-10	190	Fr	Grand Prairie, TX
97	MARQUE FOUNTAIN	DE	6-2	260	Sr	Missouri City, TX
77	NOAH FRANKLIN	OL	6-5	310	So	Vinita
42	JUSTIN GENT	LB	6-2	235	Fr	Irving, TX
37	ELLIOTT GOUDGE	K	6-0	195	Fr	San Antonio, TX
66	MIKE GRIMES	OL	6-2	310	Fr	Rowlett, TX
46	SHANE JARKA	DE	6-4	260	Fr	Fort Bend, TX
33	JOHN JOHNSON	RB	6-1	255	Jr	El Dorado, AR
89	KENNETH JOHNSON	WR	6-0	180	So	Houston, TX
2	RODRICK JOHNSON	LB	6-3	250	Sr	Galveston, TX
61	DAVID KOENIG	OL	6-5	290	Sr	Cape Coral, FL
45	PATRICK KOLLARS	K	6-0	200	So	Vinita
17	JACOB LACEY	DB	5-11	175	Jr	Garland, TX
4	PATRICK LAVINE	LB	6-3	220	So	Houston, TX
52	ANDREW LAWRENCE	OL	6-4	305	So	Dallas, GA
41	ORIE LEMON	LB	6-1	225	So	Houston, TX
54	ANDREW LEWIS	OL	6-5	295	So	Joplin, MO
29	BILLY LEWIS	DB	6-0	195	Sr	Tulsa
93	JONATHAN LEWIS	DL	6-2	290	So	Carrollton, TX
49	DAVID MANISON	DB	6-1	190	So	Oklahoma City
23	DEAARON MARTIN	RB	5-8	190	Sr	Oklahoma City
27	CALVIN MICKENS	DB	6-2	200	Jr	Beaumont, TX
26	QUINTON MOORE	S	5-11	185	Jr	Pearland, TX
28	JON MORRIS	WR	6-0	195	Sr	Glenpool
26	TODD NELSON	WR	6-2	205	Jr	Edmond
19	JEREMY NETHON	LB	6-0	225	Sr	Beggs
15	SETH NEWTON	WR	6-3	195	Jr	Girard, KS
36	ALEX ODIARI	LB	6-0	240	Jr	Carrollton, TX
25	CHRIS OFFOR	RB	5-11	210	Jr	Glenpool
62	ALLEN OH	DL	6-1	290	Jr	Irving, TX
76	RUSSELL OKUNG	OL	6-5	290	So	Fort Bend, TX
67	JERRY PALMOORE	OL	6-6	315	Jr	Memphis, TN
4	ANTHONY PARKS	WR	6-1	190	Sr	Olathe, KS
71	TRENT PERKINS	OL	6-5	300	Fr	Alice, TX
13	NATHAN PETERSON	DE	6-2	240	Sr	Tulsa
87	BRANDON PETTIGREW	TE	6-6	260	Jr	Tyler, TX
6	RICKY PRICE	DB	6-1	190	Jr	Houston, TX
94	PATRICK QUENCEY	DL	6-3	265	Fr	Columbus, GA
14	BOBBY REID	QB	6-3	235	Jr	Houston, TX
38	COLE REYNOLDS	P	6-2	225	So	Edmond
85	JASON RICKS	K	6-2	200	Jr	Round Rock, TX
11	ZAC ROBINSON	QB	6-3	205	So	Littleton, CO
22	DANTRELL SAVAGE	RB	5-9	195	Sr	Columbus, GA
57	JACOB SECREST	OL	6-5	295	Fr	Stillwater
20	ANDRE SEXTON	S	6-1	210	So	Houston, TX
48	JARED SMITH	LS	6-2	190	Fr	Duncan
40	MIKE SMITH	LS	5-9	190	So	Lawton
88	PASCHAL SMITH	TE	6-5	260	Sr	Dallas, TX
84	TAYLOR SOKOLOSKY	WR	5-10	200	Fr	Tulsa
49	RALSTON STOKER	DB	5-9	180	Fr	Dallas, TX
92	TONGA TEA	DL	6-0	315	Jr	Anchorage, AK
28	AL'DARIUS THOMPSON	DB	5-11	180	So	Mesquite, TX
5	KEITH TOSTON	RB	6-1	210	So	Angleton, TX
7	MARTEL VAN ZANT	DB	6-1	210	Sr	Tyler, TX
82	JUSTIN WALLER	TE	6-4	240	Jr	Ponca City
63	DAVID WASHINGTON	OL	6-3	305	Jr	Guthrie
52	DOUG WOODFORD	LB	6-0	215	Fr	Enid
83	ARTRELL WOODS	WR	6-1	185	So	Bryan, TX
8	DONOVAN WOODS	S	6-2	225	Sr	Oklahoma City

NOTEBOOK

The returns on Texas oilman and OSU alum **Boone Pickens'** $250 million investment keep rolling in. The north side of Pickens Stadium, complete with luxury suites to match the south side that opened in 2004, was finished last year.

This year, the west end zone expansion — Phase III — will continue. Seating is expected to be available in time for the 2008 opener, and it is projected to be complete when Georgia comes to town for the '09 opener.

That'll raise capacity from 44,700 to 48,000.

Up next on Pickens' shopping list is a state-of-the-art athletic village, a sprawling indoor/outdoor facility for OSU's baseball, equestrian, soccer, tennis and track programs, and will also include a new $50 million indoor football practice facility.

• **Tim Beckman** is Oklahoma State's new defensive coordinator. He coached Ohio State's cornerbacks in the BCS national championship game in January, then was hired at OSU in February.

"We will try to put pressure on the quarterback, which I feel is the key to stopping today's offenses," Beckman said. "We will be sound and play with an aggressive attitude as we swarm to the football."

Beckman, who hails from Berea, Ohio, played at Findlay (Ohio) College and coached previously at Bowling Green, Western Carolina and Elon (N.C.).

• Oklahoma State was one of just two programs last season to average more than 200 yards rushing and 200 yards passing. Fiesta Bowl champion Boise State was the other. The Cowboys averaged 201.8 yards passing and 208 yards rushing.

"I think if you could do the 200-200 thing again you would take it," coach **Mike Gundy** said. "We could be more consistent and certainly we can do a better job of catching the ball."

• Oklahoma State had four Freshman All-Americans last season: kick returner **Perrish Cox**, linebacker **Chris Collins**, linebacker **Patrick Lavine** and safety **Andre Sexton**.

• Last year, for the first time in school history, four Cowboys surpassed 500 yards rushing: **Dantrell Savage** (820), **Keith Toston** (631), Mike Hamilton (546, but transferred out) and **Bobby Reid** (500). OSU's rushing total last season increased by 1,011 yards over 2005.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
B. Reid	13	148.14	148	267	11	55.4	2266	24	75	174.3
Z. Robinson	7	125.25	25	51	0	49.0	345	3	54	49.3

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
D. Savage	11	126	843	23	820	6.5	8	70	74.5
K. Toston	12	106	642	11	631	6.0	6	40	52.6
M. Hamilton	12	97	564	18	546	5.6	4	38	45.5

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
A. Bowman	13	60	1181	19.7	12	75	90.8
D. Woods	13	41	647	15.8	5	72	49.8
B. Pettigrew	13	24	310	12.9	4	31	23.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: A. Sexton 79, P. Lavine 79, R. Johnson 69
Interceptions: P. Cox 2, M. VanZant 2, Don. Woods 2
Sacks: V. DeGrate 9.5, N. Peterson 8, M. Fountain 4.5, N. Peterson 4.5
Tackles for loss: M. Fountain 13, N. Peterson 12, V. DeGrate 11.5

Results

(7-6, 3-5)

W	MISSOURI STATE	52-10
W	at Arkansas State	35-7
W	FLORIDA ATLANTIC	48-8
L	at Houston	25-34
L	at Kansas State	27-31
W	at Kansas	42-32
L	TEXAS A&M	OT 33-34
W	NEBRASKA	41-29
L	at Texas	10-36
W	BAYLOR	66-24
L	at Texas Tech	24-30
L	OKLAHOMA	21-27
	Independence Bowl	
W	vs. Alabama	34-31

Photo by John Williamson

in at defensive end.

Four Cowboys were Freshmen All-Americans last season, and two — Patrick Lavine and Chris Collins — played linebacker. Converted safety Jeremy Nethon was productive at linebacker as well and was selected Defensive MVP of the Independence Bowl.

Cornerback play was an issue last season (OSU's pass defense ranked 84th nationally), but starters Jacob Lacey and Martel Van Zant return, tough-minded and battle-tested. Andre Sexton, another Freshman All-American, led the Cowboys with 79 tackles in '06.

A solution must be found up front, however, where three tackles and two ends graduated.

Nathan Peterson, at end, is one to watch. He had 12 tackles for loss, including eight sacks last season. Marque Fountain had 13 tackles for loss in a reserve role at end.

Touted junior college transfer Tonga Tea will have a chance to play right away at tackle, where the positions are unsettled.

SPECIAL TEAMS

All the key components are back on special teams which, with emphasis on field position because of the change in kickoffs from the 35 to the 30, could mean the difference between winning and losing those games that come down to the final play, in which the Cowboys were 0-4 last season.

Junior Jason Ricks is 21 of 28 in career field goal attempts. Second-team All-American punter Matt Fodge averaged 44.9 yards per attempt last season.

Deep snapper Zach Allen and holder Cole Reynolds are also back.

Return specialist Perrish Cox was a Freshman All-American last season, averaging 12.8 yards on punt returns (14th nationally) and 23.8 on kickoffs (35th). Tommy Devereaux (10.6 yard on punts) is also back.

"Me and Tommy Devereaux, we plan on being No. 1 in kickoff returns and

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

WR Adarius Bowman

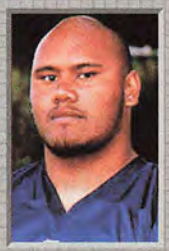
Bowman led the Big 12 last season with a 19.7-yard-per-catch average. That included a Big 12 record 300 yards receiving against Kansas. Bowman's long-distance touchdowns — 75, 69, 64, 55, 54 and 45 yards — became a team staple last season. He finished the year with 60 catches for 1,181 yards and 12 touchdowns. At 6-4, 220 pounds, he played on the OSU basketball team and even considered becoming an early entry in the NFL Draft, where scouts say he would have been a first-day pick.

EMERGING STAR

QB Bobby Reid

One of the most high-profile recruits in OSU history, Reid finally began to show why last season, when he threw for 24 touchdowns and 2,266 yards and ranked 16th nationally in pass efficiency (just 11 interceptions). He also rushed for 500 yards and six TDs. At 6-3, 235, Reid could be poised for an All-Big 12-type season.

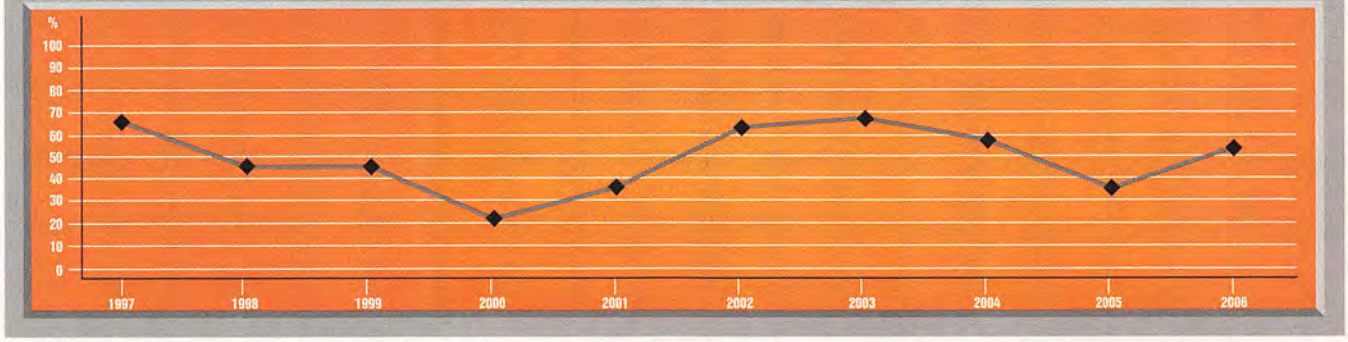
TOP NEWCOMER



DL Tonga Tea

An All-American at Snow (Utah) Community College after a one-year prep career at East High in Anchorage, Alaska. Tea (pronounced "teh") enrolled at OSU a semester early, and in the spring joined the rotation at defensive tackle — one of the team's most glaring positions of need. Last season, he had 24 tackles, nine for loss.

Oklahoma State's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

ADARIUS BOWMAN

PHOTO BY ICON SMI

Thanks to Hoops, Bowman is Better

Opposing defenses thought Adarius Bowman was plenty fast enough last season.

Bowman didn't. That's why he spent the winter playing for the Oklahoma State basketball team.

"It helped me out a lot, man," he said.

That's bad news for defensive backs this season. Before basketball, Bowman was one of college football's most dangerous wide receivers, catching 60 passes for 1,181 yards and 12 touchdowns. His 19.7-yards-per-catch average ranked fifth nationally (first among players who averaged at least four catches per game).

"Basketball helped me out a lot, especially with my foot quickness," Bowman said. "It helped me get from Point A to Point B quicker than normal. It helped me on my routes a lot, coming out of my breaks."

The 6-4, 220-pound Bowman joined the basketball team after Oklahoma State's Independence Bowl victory over Alabama. He only got into five games, and he averaged just 3.4 minutes in those games. He made one field goal (a three-pointer), missed two free throws, collected four rebounds, two fouls and a turnover.

"Oh man, before I even started, I knew not to set myself up for failure," Bowman said.

"I just came in, practiced hard, worked hard, helped the guys out a lot in practice. I didn't get to see all the time I wanted, but I'm not mad about any of it. I enjoyed the whole experience. It made me a better person."

And all those hours spent in a near-empty gym, sweating and straining on the hardwood? The payoff comes this fall in his senior season.

"Defensive drills, man," he said. "Those long practices of doing defensive slides and all the stuff we did. Just being down there in a low stance, it helped my flexibility out a lot. We did a lot of stretching."

That's exactly what Bowman will be doing to defenses this fall.

After an All-American prep career at Notre Dame High School in Chattanooga, Tenn., Bowman played his first two seasons of college football at North Carolina. He transferred to OSU in 2005, when Cowboys coach Mike Gundy hired Tar Heels assistant Gunter Brewer to coach wideouts.

Bowman sat out 2005, then exploded in 2006. His high point came in Week Six against Kansas: a school-record 13 catches, four touchdowns and a new Big 12 record 300 yards receiving.

"I call it hungry, just sitting out that year," he said. "I was just ready to get back on the field."

punt returns this year," said Cox.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

While OSU might be better in 2007, so is the schedule. Eight of the 12 opponents played in a bowl game last season, and of those, five — including the season-opener at Georgia — will be played on the road.

"This year we have to be a tougher team," Gundy said. "We will need to be a mentally tougher team to be successful at some of the places we have to play next fall."

After opening league action at home against Texas Tech, the Cowboys visit Texas A&M and Nebraska on consecutive weekends.

Then comes a break, sort of. The next three games are at home, but the Kansas State and Kansas contests are sandwiched around a test against Big 12 South favorite Texas.

Two more road trips close the season. The first is Baylor, who stunned the Cowboys in Waco two years ago. The finale at Oklahoma could be OSU's most daunting task.

— John E. Hoover

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Georgia
Sept. 8	FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Sept. 14	at Troy
Sept. 22	TEXAS TECH
Sept. 29	SAM HOUSTON STATE
Oct. 6	at Texas A&M
Oct. 13	at Nebraska
Oct. 20	KANSAS STATE
Nov. 3	TEXAS
Nov. 10	KANSAS
Nov. 17	at Baylor
Nov. 24	at Oklahoma

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LONGHORNS

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AT A GLANCE

2006

10-3 overall, 6-2 Big 12 (2nd, South)

COACH

Mack Brown — At Texas: 93-22, 9 years; overall: 179-96-1, 23 years

RETURNING STARTERS

13; 6 offense, 6 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Colt McCoy, RB Jamaal Charles, WR Limas Sweed, WR Quan Cosby, TE Jermichael Finley, DT Frank Okam, LB Roddrick Muckelroy, S Marcus Griffin

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Texas will be able to score plenty of points, with RB Jamaal Charles and TE Jermichael Finley ready to excel in full-time roles. The co-defensive coordinators know their stuff, having worked together during Arizona's Desert Swarm days in the 1990s.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Texas' secondary was like a sieve last year, and now it loses three starters, including Thorpe Award winner Aaron Ross. Rebuilding must be done there, as well as on the offensive line, where both guards and the center are gone.

KEY LOSSES

OL Justin Blalock, CB Aaron Ross, OG Kasey Studdard, DE Tim Crowder, DE Brian Robison, S Michael Griffin

OVERVIEW

Even with an untested freshman quarterback, Texas lingered in the national-championship picture into November last season. If the young, stockpiled talent on defense can step to the forefront, the Longhorns will be in the hunt for more than just the Big 12 title.

Longhorns Have Real McCoy ... With Real Muscle

Every now and then, Texas quarterback Colt McCoy still wakes up in agony.

The pain doesn't come from the nerve he pinched in his neck and shoulder at the end of last year, the one that hampered him for the final two games of the regular season. That injury has long since healed.

The mental distress from what those two missed games cost him — and, more important, cost the Longhorns — still hasn't subsided.

"I wake up thinking about it all the time," McCoy said. "What would have happened if I hadn't have gotten hurt?"

If you ask Texas fans, without McCoy's injury, the Longhorns would have won a second consecutive Big 12 championship and qualified for a third straight BCS game.

Instead, the Longhorns closed the regular season with losses to Kansas State and Texas A&M, abdicated the South Division title to Oklahoma and wound up in the Alamo Bowl.

Heading into his sophomore season, McCoy — bigger, stronger and more experienced — aims to pick up where he left off before his shoulder betrayed him last season.

"Hopefully what happened last year can be a steppingstone for this year," McCoy said.

If the Longhorns are to return to the top of the Big 12 mountain this year, it likely will come on the strength of McCoy's newly invigorated shoulders.

McCoy, a baby-faced, mild-mannered wunderkind, came out of nowhere to throw for 2,590 yards and a school-record 29 touchdowns last season en route to earning National Freshman of the Year honors.

At this time last year, folks around the Texas program were wondering how a redshirt freshman could possibly hope to replace Vince Young as the Longhorns' quarterback. Now, they are wondering what McCoy might do for an encore.

"He is stronger; he's even more accurate if that's even possible, and he obviously has a better feel of the offense," coach Mack Brown said. "Colt has a chance to be a really special player."

McCoy's pass-catchers have substantially high hopes for him as well.

"By the time he's done here," senior Billy Pittman said, "he's going to have all the records."

To help recreate the magic of his freshman season, McCoy spent most of the offseason in the weight room, bulking up.

He put on 10 pounds — up to 215 — in hopes of better sustaining the pounding of a Big 12 season.

"I'm tired of being thrown around," McCoy said. "I don't want to get hurt again."

The Longhorns second the motion. Their Big 12 title hopes might depend on it.

OFFENSE

At this time last year, quarterback Colt McCoy was the Longhorns' biggest question mark. Now, he's the Longhorns' biggest star.

McCoy was not only prolific last year, he was also efficient, throwing just seven interceptions to go with those 29 touchdowns.

More than that, McCoy took over as the unabashed leader of the locker room,

Colt McCoy Photo by Doug Hollemon

PHOTO BY BRIAN BAHR/GETTY IMAGES

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 162.6 ypg rushing (7th in Big 12/34th in NCAA), 228.8 ypg passing (5th/33rd), 391.5 ypg total offense (6th/22nd), 35.9 ppg (1st/6th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Colt McCoy*	So.	No reason to expect a sophomore slump.	Sherrod Harris, Fr.
RB	Jamaal Charles	Jr.	Speedster looks for bounce-back season.	Chris Ogbonnaya, Jr.
WR	Limas Sweed*	Sr.	Emerged as a touchdown machine in 2006.	Nate Jones, Sr.
WR	Billy Pittman*	Sr.	Got lost in shuffle after breakout 2005 season.	George Walker, Jr.
SL	Quan Cosby*	Jr.	Blossomed into one of McCoy's favorite targets.	Jordan Shipley, Jr.
TE	Jermichael Finley	So.	Likely is a future star in the making.	Peter Ullman, Jr.
LT	Tony Hills*	Sr.	Must step up to anchor rebuilding unit.	J'Marcus Webb, So.
LG	Charlie Tanner	So.	Job will be up for grabs until first game.	Chris Hall, So.
C	Dallas Griffin	Sr.	Long-time backup finally gets his chance.	Buck Burnette, Fr.
RG	Cedric Dockery	Jr.	Knee injury derailed promising 2006.	Chris Hall, So.
RT	Adam Ulatoski*	So.	Endured trial by fire as freshman starter.	J'Marcus Webb, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 61.2 ypg rushing (1st in Big 12/3rd NCAA), 236.2 passing (10th/99th), 297.4 total defense (2nd/22nd), 18.3 ppg (3rd/26th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Brian Orakpo	Jr.	Speed demon gets first crack as starter.	Lamarr Houston, So.
DT	Frank Okam*	Sr.	Playing for NFL paycheck after quiet junior year.	Roy Miller, Jr.
DT	Derek Lokey*	Sr.	Team's most productive lineman also its most fragile.	Thomas Marshall, Sr.
DE	Aaron Lewis	Jr.	Filled in at end and tackle last season.	Eddie Jones, Fr.
LB	Robert Killebrew*	Sr.	Looking over shoulder at former top recruit Kindle.	Sergio Kindle, So.
LB	Rashad Bobino*	Jr.	Undersized middle linebacker plays bigger than his specs.	Jared Norton, So.
LB	Roddrick Muckelroy	So.	Torn finger tendon ruined freshman year.	Scott Derry, Sr.*
CB	Brandon Foster	Sr.	Has made all of one career start.	Deon Beasley, So.
CB	Chykie Brown	Fr.	Should star in secondary for years to come.	Ryan Palmer, Jr.
SS	Erick Jackson	Sr.	Must fight off Kelson, a linebacker transplant.	Drew Kelson, Sr.
FS	Marcus Griffin*	Sr.	Only returning starter in reconstructed secondary.	Erick Jackson, Sr.

*Returning starter

a role Vince Young vacated when he left for the NFL.

"Coming into the year, I knew I'd be all right," McCoy said. "But you have to earn the respect of your teammates and coaches. You have to make them believe."

With a great deal of his supporting cast returning, McCoy could be poised for more success as a sophomore.

Every wideout who caught a pass last year is back, a list highlighted by senior All-American candidate Limas Sweed (46 catches, 801 yards, 12 TDs) and junior Quan Cosby (45 catches, 525 yards).

In the backfield, junior Jamaal Charles will look to make the most of his inaugural turn as the team's go-to tailback. Charles, a 6-1, 200-pound blur who moonlights as a sprinter on the Texas track team, owns the speed and the shiftiness to become one of the Big 12's best.

The Longhorns' most pressing concern on offense can be found on the line, where they must replace a trio of starters — guard/tackle Justin Blalock, guard Kasey Studdard and center Lyle Sendlein — who accounted for 115 career starts.

The unit should get a boost from the return of junior Cedric Dockery, who started the first six games at right guard last year before suffering a season-ending knee injury.

Tony Hills and Adam Ulatoski, both tackles, are the Longhorns' only returning full-time starters on the line.

DEFENSE

For the third time in five seasons, there will be a new voice calling plays for the Texas defense. This time, at least it will be a familiar voice.

Co-coordinator Duane Akina, a longtime Texas assistant, shifted into the role of chief play-caller when Gene Chizik left for Iowa State last November.

Akina will have intriguing — if inexperienced — pieces with which to work.

The Longhorns' biggest question mark is in the defensive backfield, where they lose a Thorpe Award winner (cornerback Aaron Ross), another All-American (safety Michael Griffin) and a three-year starter (cornerback Tarell Brown).

Seniors Brandon Foster and Ryan Palmer likely will get first crack at the vacant cornerback slots, but don't be surprised to see sophomore Deon Beasley and freshman Chykie Brown make

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

John Chiles, ATH

Chiles was one of the most heavily recruited prospects in the Dallas Metroplex. He gave an early commitment to Texas to increase the likelihood of getting a shot at the quarterback position in Austin. Arriving in December, Chiles is getting that opportunity in spring practice.

Curtis Brown, DB

A five-star prospect, Brown has proven he has athleticism to be an early impact guy. Armed with a big frame, good speed and quickness, Brown's early arrival in Austin for spring practice should speed up his development. Brown played both ways in high school, and he could be a two-way prospect at UT.

Michael Huey, OL

Though not as highly rated out of high school as Tray Allen, Huey's mean streak — and the fact that he's on campus for spring ball — gives him the edge. The nation's No. 4 rated offensive guard prospect showed in high school that he can be nasty inside.

THE SLEEPER

Sam Acho, DE

The 6-2, 250-pound Acho, who played at a private school in Dallas, didn't receive many early scholarship offers. However, when his highlight film started to make the rounds the flood gates opened. Acho's big frame and aggressiveness on defense jumped out to coaches and recruiting fans alike. He has the potential to figure into the mix later in his career.

Committments	24
Average Stars	3.83
★★★★★	2
★★★★☆	17
★★★☆☆	4
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	92
National Rank: 5	Big 12: 1

2008 NEEDS

Linebacker is one of the bigger needs for Texas in the 2008 class. UT also could use a few solid additions at running back. The Longhorns only signed one linebacker prospect in the class of 2007 (Keenan Robinson). Texas needs to add more depth at the position in 2008. Don't look for quarterback to be a big priority.

— John Talman, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
ACHO, Sam	DE	6-2, 250	★★★	Dallas, TX	St. Mark's
Rivals.com's No. 41 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 23 strongside defensive end nationally.					
ALLEN, Tray	OL	6-4, 305	★★★★★	Grand Prairie, TX	South Grand Prairie
Rivals.com's No. 16 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 3 prospect in Texas. ... No. 2 offensive guard nationally. ... *USA Today* first-team All-America.					
BROWN, Curtis	DB	6-0, 174	★★★★★	Gilmer, TX	Gilmer
Rivals.com's No. 21 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 4 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 2 cornerback nationally. ... Class 3A first-team All-State.					
CARTER, Russell	DE	6-3, 230	★★★★	Houston, TX	Westbury
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 24 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 12 strongside defensive end nationally. ... Class 5A second-team All-State.					
CHILES, John	ATH	6-1, 195	★★★★	Mansfield, TX	Summit
Rivals.com's No. 31 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 5 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 2 athlete nationally. ... Two-time district MVP. ... Started at quarterback and wide receiver during his prep career.					
COLLINS, Brandon	WR	6-0, 167	★★★★	Brenham, TX	Brenham
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 31 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 26 wide receiver nationally. ... Class 4A All-State honorable mention.					
HARRIS, Ian	TE	6-3, 217	★★★★	San Antonio, TX	Churchill
Rivals.com's No. 90 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 38 tight end nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Caught 15 passes for 106 yards and three touchdowns as a senior.					
HIGGINS, Tyrell	DT	6-3, 260	★★	Schertz, TX	Clemens
Class 4A All-State honorable mention. ... Had 108 tackles, six sacks and two interceptions as a senior.					
HIX, Kyle	OL	6-6, 290	★★★★	Aledo, TX	Aledo
Rivals250 member. ... No. 28 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 17 offensive tackle nationally. ... First-team All-State. ... District offensive MVP as senior.					
HOWARD, Ahmard	TE	6-4, 225	★★★	Brenham, TX	Brenham
Rivals.com's No. 50 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 16 tight end nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Caught 17 passes for 325 yards and seven touchdowns over final two years.					
HUEY, Michael	OL	6-5, 290	★★★★	Kilgore, TX	Kilgore
Rivals.com's No. 39 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 6 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 4 offensive guard nationally. ... Class 4A first-team All-State.					
IRBY, Blaine	TE	6-2, 224	★★★★	Ventura, CA	St. Bonaventure
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 26 overall prospect in California. ... No. 6 tight end nationally. ... Had 43 catches for 658 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior.					
JOHNSON, Cody	RB	5-10, 225	★★★★	Waller, TX	Waller
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 18 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 1 fullback nationally. ... Second-team All-State. ... Rushed for 1,743 yards and 21 touchdowns as a senior.					
JONES, Andre	DT	6-4, 305	★★★★	El Paso, TX	Andress
Rivals.com's No. 72 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 10 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 7 defensive tackle nationally. ... *Parade* All-American. ... Texas Class 4A Defensive Player of the Year.					
KINNE, G.J.	QB	6-2, 207	★★★	Gilmer, TX	Gilmer
Rivals.com's No. 58 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 15 dual-threat quarterback nationally. ... Class 3A Offensive Player of the Year.					
KIRKENDOLL, James	WR	5-10, 178	★★★★	Round Rock, TX	Round Rock
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 33 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 27 wide receiver nationally. ... Had 923 receiving yards and eight touchdowns.					
McGASKEY, Aundre	OL	6-4, 290	★★★★	La Marque, TX	La Marque
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 15 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 6 offensive guard nationally. ... All-District. ... Played on Class 4A state championship team.					
ROBINSON, Keenan	LB	6-3, 211	★★★★	Plano, TX	East
Rivals.com's No. 97 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 13 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 4 outside linebacker nationally. ... *Parade* All-American. ... *USA Today* first-team All-American.					
SCOTT, Christian	DB	6-0, 185	★★★★	Dallas, TX	Skyline
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 16 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 10 safety nationally. ... Had 48 tackles and three interceptions as a senior.					
THOMAS, Earl	ATH	5-10, 174	★★★★	Orange, TX	West-Orange Stark
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 19 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 12 athlete nationally. ... Class 3A second-team All-State.					
WELLS, Ben	DB	6-1, 185	★★★★	Beaumont, TX	Ozen
Rivals.com's No. 88 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 12 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 7 cornerback nationally. ... Class 4A first-team All-State.					
WHITTAKER, Foswhitt	RB	5-9, 187	★★★★	Pearland, TX	Pearland
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 27 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 6 all-purpose back nationally. ... Sixth all-time rusher in Texas Class 5A history with 5,717 yards.					
WILCOXON, Michael	DT	6-2, 271	★★★	Aledo, TX	Aledo
Rivals.com's No. 91 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 54 defensive tackle nationally. ... Class 4A second-team All-State.					
WILLIAMS, Malcolm	WR	6-3, 205	★★★★	Garland, TX	Garland
Rivals.com's No. 80 overall prospect nationally. ... No. 11 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 11 wide receiver nationally. ... Class 5A first-team All-State.					

LONGHORNS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
92	BEN ALEXANDER	DT	6-0	310	So	Anderson, SC
33	JAMES ALLENSWORTH	DB	5-8	161	So	Austin
82	COY AUNE	WR	6-2	191	Sr	Austin
39	RYAN BAILEY	P/PK	6-2	195	Jr	Austin
7	DEON BEASLEY	CB	5-10	170	So	Orange
44	RASHAD BOBINO	LB	5-11	228	Jr	La Marque
8	CHYKIE BROWN	DB	6-1	180	Fr	Houston
3	CURTIS BROWN	DB	6-0	174	Fr	Gilmer
65	BUCK BURNETTE	OL	6-3	310	Fr	Wimberley
23	JAIME CARVAJAL	RB	5-4	162	Sr	Taft
25	JAMAAL CHARLES	RB	6-1	200	Jr	Port Arthur
7	JOHN CHILES	QB	6-1	195	Fr	Dallas
24	ANTWAN COBB	RB	6-0	215	Fr	Pflugerville
6	QUAN COSBY	WR	5-11	200	Jr	Mart
33	SCOTT DERRY	LB	6-3	230	Sr	Pearland
55	CEDRIC DOCKERY	OG	6-4	320	Jr	Garland
42	DUSTIN EARNEST	LB	6-3	221	Fr	Texarkana
90	BRAIN ELLIS	DE	6-5	287	Fr	Grand Prairie
16	JERMICHAEL FINLEY	TE	6-5	236	So	Diboll
21	MICHAEL FLATH	S	5-9	180	Sr	Arcadia, CA
28	BRANDON FOSTER	CB	5-9	180	Sr	Arlington
1	TYRELL GATEWOOD	S	6-2	210	Sr	Tyler
17	TREVOR GERLAND	P/PK	6-2	190	So	Katy
47	JOHN GOLD	P	6-3	200	So	Palestine
67	DALLAS GRIFFIN	C	6-4	285	Sr	Katy
26	MARCUS GRIFFIN	S	6-0	202	Sr	Austin
71	CHRIS HALL	OG	6-4	295	So	Irving
17	SHERROD HARRIS	QB	6-3	219	Fr	Arlington
87	MATT HARTLE	TE	6-4	225	So	Isle of Palms, SC
58	WILLIAM HARVEY	DS	5-11	225	Jr	Houston
30	JAMES HENRY	S	6-2	212	Fr	Schertz
79	TONY HILLS	OT	6-6	305	Sr	Houston
55	RENE HINOJOSA	DL	6-2	240	So	Weslaco
36	LAMARR HOUSTON	DE	6-2	265	So	Colorado Springs, CO
37	LAWRENCE HOWARD	DB	5-10	168	So	Hitchcock
63	MICHAEL HUEY	OL	6-5	290	Fr	Kilgore
21	ERICK JACKSON	S	6-2	200	Sr	Cedar Hill
93	DRE JONES	DT	6-4	305	Fr	El Paso
32	EDDIE JONES	DE	6-3	260	Fr	Kilgore
9	NATE JONES	WR	6-2	195	Sr	Texarkana
12	ROBERT JOSEPH	S	6-2	195	So	Port Arthur
4	DREW KELSON	LB	6-2	215	Sr	Houston
40	ROBERT KILLEBREW	LB	6-2	230	Sr	Spring
2	SERGIO KINDLE	LB	6-4	239	So	Dallas
59	CHAD KUGLER	LB	6-2	220	Jr	Richardson
26	STEPHEN LANE	RB	6-0	190	Jr	Tyler
15	HUNTER LAWRENCE	K	6-0	175	So	Boerne
95	AARON LEWIS	DE	6-4	260	Jr	Albuquerque, NM
96	DEREK LOKEY	DT	6-2	280	Sr	Denton
46	DREW MARCANTONIO	FB	6-1	208	So	Corpus Christi
18	JOSH MARSHALL	WR	6-4	210	Fr	Arlington
94	THOMAS MARSHALL	DT	6-6	290	Sr	Dallas
12	COLT McCOY	QB	6-3	215	So	Tuscola
2	VONDRELL McGEE	RB	5-10	200	Fr	Longview
88	MAC McWHORTER	TE	6-4	242	So	Austin
37	HENRY MELTON	DE	6-3	268	Jr	Grapevine
52	CORY MICHNER	DE	6-0	215	Jr	St. Louis, MO
99	ROY MILLER	DT	6-2	295	Jr	Killeen
72	BRITT MITCHELL	OT	6-5	280	Fr	Kilgore
24	RYAN MOENCH	DB	6-0	195	Jr	Austin
43	JUSTIN MOORE	P/PK	6-2	197	Jr	Houston
75	STEVE MOORE	OL	6-5	296	Fr	Houston
38	RODDRICK MUCKELROY	LB	6-2	230	So	Hallsville
11	JARED NORTON	LB	6-3	236	So	Rowlett
19	ISHIE ODUEGWU	S	5-10	205	So	Denton
3	CHRIS OGBONNAYA	RB	6-1	225	Jr	Missouri City
97	FRANK OKAM	DT	6-5	320	Sr	Dallas
68	DREW OLDIS	OG	6-4	282	So	Boerne
98	BRIAN ORAKPO	DE	6-4	248	Jr	Houston
82	DANIEL ORR	WR	6-0	180	Jr	Corsicana
13	RYAN PALMER	CB	5-10	190	Jr	Arlington
1	PHILIP PAYNE	WR	6-2	210	Fr	Garland
5	BILLY PITTMAN	WR	6-0	200	Sr	Cameron
45	NIC REDWINE	DE	6-3	225	Jr	Tyler
8	JORDAN SHIPLEY	WR	6-0	188	Jr	Burnet
83	GREG SMITH	TE	6-4	248	Fr	Montgomery
40	ALEX SPEARS	FB	5-6	200	Jr	Houston
4	LIMAS SWEED	WR	6-5	219	Sr	Brenham
52	CHARLIE TANNER	OG	6-4	295	So	Austin
54	MICHAEL TAYLOR	C	5-11	240	Jr	La Marque
49	LUKE TIEMANN	FB	6-2	235	Jr	Pflugerville
14	FREDDY TORRES	QB	6-1	190	Jr	Pecos
74	ADAM ULATOSKI	OT	6-8	300	So	Southlake
86	PETER ULLMAN	TE	6-4	255	Jr	Austin
50	C.A. VERGARI	DE	6-3	205	So	Bronxville, NY
84	GEORGE WALKER	WR	6-3	215	Jr	Houston
15	TREVOR WALKER	QB	6-2	195	So	Mount Pleasant
78	ROY WATTS, JR.	OT	6-6	315	Fr	Houston
73	J'MARCUS WEBB	OT	6-8	310	So	Mesquite
14	MONTRE WEBBER	WR	6-3	206	Fr	Hearne
5	BEN WELLS	DB	6-1	185	Fr	Beaumont
22	FOSWHITT WHITTAKER	RB	5-9	187	Fr	Houston
30	CHRIS WIELAND	DB	5-9	170	Jr	Cedar Park
11	GILBERT ZEPEDA	QB	6-0	210	Sr	Pharr

NOTEBOOK

Co-defensive coordinator **Duane Akina** was reunited with an old friend in the offseason when Texas hired **Larry Mac Duff** to be his fellow co-coordinator.

The two last teamed up at the University of Arizona in the early 1990s, when they helped build the Wildcats' famed "Desert Swarm" defense. Mac Duff joined the Texas staff when Gene Chizik left to become the head coach at Iowa State.

Mac Duff's arrival doesn't necessarily portend the advent of "Desert Swarm II." Still, the old friends believe they can recreate some of the success they experienced in their last go-round together.

"I think we're fortunate to get a coach of his stature," Akina said. "I'm excited about it. He's a good friend and an outstanding football coach."

• Inspired by the added dimension Tim Tebow brought to Florida's running game last season, **Mack Brown** says the Longhorns could use one of their two freshman backup quarterbacks in a similar role this season.

Sherrod Harris, a redshirt freshman, and **John Chiles**, a true freshman, both wowed coaches during spring drills with their scintillating athleticism and knack for making plays with their feet. Brown vows that one of the two will see "quality playing time" this fall.

"Tebow opened some eyes because he was able to make some plays," Brown said. "Everyone griped about it until they saw they were going to win the national championship. Then it became the trend."

• Just in time for his senior season, **Drew Kelson** has finally found a position. It's the same position at which he began his Texas career three years ago.

Kelson is back at safety after seeing time at running back and linebacker over his first three seasons. He is 6-2, 215, and has speed that allowed him to keep up with Reggie Bush on a pass route during the 2006 Rose Bowl. Kelson is expected to vie for the starting job at free safety.

"I just wanted to do whatever I could to get on the field and help the team," Kelson said.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Att	Cmp	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
C. McCoy	13	161.82	318	217	7	68.2	2570	29	72	197.7
J. Snead	8	121.97	49	26	2	53.1	371	2	56	46.4

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
J. Charles	12	156	870	39	831	5.3	7	46	69.2
S. Young	12	137	630	39	591	4.3	7	37	49.2
H. Melton	13	45	196	3	193	4.3	6	21	14.8

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
L. Sweed	13	46	801	17.4	12	60	61.6
Q. Cosby	13	45	525	11.7	2	51	40.4
B. Pittman	13	35	456	13.0	4	62	35.1

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: Mi.Griffin 126, Ma. Griffin 190, A. Ross 80
Interceptions: A. Rose 6, M.Griffin 4, three with 1
Sacks: T. Crowder 10.5, B. Robison 5.5, B. Drakpo 4.5
Tackles for loss: T. Crowder 19, R. Bobino 13, S. Derry 9, A. Lewis 8

Results

(10-3, 6-2)

W	NORTH TEXAS	56-7
L	OHIO STATE	7-24
W	at Rice	52-7
W	IOWA STATE	37-14
W	SAM HOUSTON STATE	56-3
W	Oklahoma (Dallas)	28-10
W	BAYLOR	63-31
W	at Nebraska	22-20
W	at Texas Tech	35-31
W	OKLAHOMA STATE	36-10
L	at Kansas State	42-45
L	TEXAS A&M	7-12
	Alamo Bowl	
W	vs. Iowa	26-24

FRANK OKAM

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

a strong case for playing time.

Erick Jackson and Drew Kelson, a transplant from linebacker, will vie for time at safety next to Marcus Griffin, the secondary's only returning starter.

The good news for the secondary? After finishing 99th last season against the pass, the Longhorns would be hard-pressed to fare any worse.

The Longhorns also could see a youth surge at linebacker. Sophomore Roddrick Muckelroy is expected to regain his starting spot on the outside after missing the final 10 games of last season with a torn finger tendon.

Middle linebacker Rashad Bobino and outside linebacker Robert Killebrew return to start, but should be pushed by heralded sophomores Jared Norton and Sergio Kindle.

On the front lines, the Longhorns will miss ends Brian Robison and Tim Crowder, who combined for 15 sacks last year. Juniors Brian Orakpo and Aaron Lewis, both of whom saw significant action as reserves a year ago, will step into those spots.

Frank Okam and Derek Lokey, both seniors, ought to provide the Longhorns with a formidable one-two punch at tackle.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ryan Bailey, the walk-on hero of Texas' 11th-hour victory at Nebraska last season, could play an even more prominent role.

He's slated to be the team's starting field goal kicker this season, provided he can survive a challenge from sophomore kickoff specialist Hunter Lawrence.

Punting duties should fall to Trevor Gerland, a former high school track star who once finished second to future Texas teammate Jamaal Charles in the 110-meter hurdles at the state championships. The Longhorns will hope he doesn't have to use that speed as a punter.

In the return game, the Longhorns will look for a replacement for Aaron Ross, whose three career punt-return touchdowns were a school record. Quan Cosby,

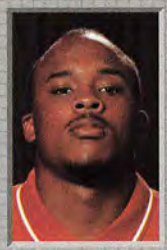
The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Colt McCoy

McCoy was a revelation last season, going from anonymous freshman to Heisman Trophy consideration in the span of a few months. ... He passed for 2,570 yards and 29 touchdowns, setting a UT record and matching a national freshman mark for TD tosses. ... McCoy, 6-3, 215, also became the first freshman in school history to win 10 games as a starter. In fact, the Longhorns' only two losses after September last season came with McCoy either out with or hampered by a shoulder stinger injury.

EMERGING STAR



TE Jermichael Finley

Next to Colt McCoy, Finley was Texas' other breakout freshman last season. In limited action as the Longhorns' No. 2 tight end, Finley caught 31 passes for 372 yards and three TDs. All those totals rank first on the school's freshman tight end lists and helped land Finley freshman All-America honors. ... Finley, who caught eight passes in Texas' victory over Iowa in the Alamo Bowl, takes over as the team's primary tight end this season.

TOP NEWCOMER

OL Tray Allen

Allen, a 6-4, 305-pounder widely regarded as the top high school prospect in Texas last year, has been pegged as the lineman of the future for the Longhorns. ... A consensus prep All-American at South Grand Prairie High School near Dallas, Allen is built in the mold of former Texas All-American Justin Blalock. He could play either guard or tackle for the Longhorns but probably will wind up inside. ... Allen might not be able to contribute right away, but Texas coaches see stardom for him.

Player Profile

PHOTO BY RONALD MARTINEZ/GETTY IMAGES

Charles Ready To Sprint To Stardom

Tailback Jamaal Charles is a sprinter by track-and-field trade, and a pretty good one at that. He was an All-American for the Longhorns' track team last season, turning in some of the squad's top times.

On the football field, meanwhile, Charles learned the hard way what it was like to be a high jumper who had set the bar too high.

A tantalizing freshman season had Texas fans craving more out of Charles last year as a sophomore. He couldn't quite deliver, turning in an 831-yard, seven-touchdown season that, by his own admission, was a tad pedestrian.

"I think he was disappointed in the year he had last season," offensive coordinator Greg Davis said. "He had set higher standards for himself."

Reinvigorated, rededicated and, in a sense, reinvented, Charles intends to surpass all expectations this season.

After sharing the workload with other backs for most of his first two years on campus, Charles enters his junior season the undisputed bell cow of the Longhorns' backfield.

He intends to prove he deserves the job.

"I want to show everybody why I'm here, why they recruited me," Charles said. "I'm trying to touch the ball as much as possible."

To that end, Charles gave up indoor track this year, using his time to bulk up for the beating he expects to receive in his first go-round as the Longhorns' every-down back this fall.

He's up to 205 pounds on his 6-1 frame, which Charles believes will help him avoid some of the nagging injuries that have tarnished his first two seasons on campus. He's put on the weight without sacrificing the speed and quickness that made him an instant TD threat as a freshman.

"This year, I'll be the guaranteed guy," Charles said. "I wanted to get bigger so I could handle however many carries they want to give me."

That's music to the ears of coach Mack Brown, who says he'd like for Charles to touch the ball upward of 25 times a game this season.

"He's really, really working to step his game back up. He wants to take over," Brown said.

And so the bar has been raised again for Charles. This time, he hopes to clear it.

Jordan Shipley and Deon Beasley all could get a crack at filling Ross' shoes.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The schedule sets up nicely for the Longhorns to make a run at regaining the Big 12 title and, possibly, a BCS berth.

With the notable exception of their annual rivalry games — against Oklahoma in Dallas and at Texas A&M — the Longhorns get most every other tough matchup at home.

Nebraska and Texas Tech both come to Austin this season, as does TCU, Texas' most formidable non-conference opponent.

Additional Big 12 road trips to Baylor and Iowa State shouldn't be too daunting, though that jaunt to Oklahoma State in early November has the look of a potential trap game.

No matter what happens this year, the Longhorns are still going to Disney World. On Sept. 15, Texas heads to Orlando for a historic non-conference game against Central Florida. It is the first-ever meeting between the two schools.

— Jeff McDonald

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 8	TCU
Sept. 15	at UCF
Sept. 22	RICE
Sept. 29	KANSAS STATE
Oct. 6	(Dallas) Oklahoma
Oct. 13	at Iowa State
Oct. 20	at Baylor
Oct. 27	NEBRASKA
Nov. 3	at Oklahoma State
Nov. 10	TEXAS TECH
Nov. 23	at Texas A&M

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AGGIES

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AT A GLANCE

2006

2006: 9-4 overall, 5-3 Big 12 (3rd, South)

COACH

Dennis Franchione — At Texas A&M: 25-23, 4 years; overall: 180-96-2, 24 years

RETURNING STARTERS

15; 8 offense, 6 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Stephen McGee, RB Mike Goodson, RB Jorvorskie Lane, TE Martellus Bennett, C Cody Wallace, G Kirk Elder, DE Chris Harrington, DT Red Bryant, DB Jordan Peterson, P Justin Brantly

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

With a diverse and deep running game, the Aggies can eat up clock like few teams in the country (the Aggies led the nation in time of possession last year). The Aggies also do a tremendous job in protecting the football, and the defense showed dramatic improvements last season under coordinator Gary Darnell.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

A&M is a more talented and deeper team than the one that went to the Holiday Bowl last season, but the brutal road schedule this year could make it difficult to improve on the nine wins.

KEY LOSSES

S Melvin Bullitt, WR Chad Schroeder, LB Justin Warren

OVERVIEW

The Aggies do not have many holes to fill. The offense is balanced with the run and pass, able to attack slowly or with a quick burst. The defensive secondary is better, as is the defense as a whole. But A&M's five road trips have "danger" written all over them and could wreck the season.

Aggies Have the Confidence to Seal the Deal

During an unusually warm, late-November day last fall, quarterback Stephen McGee entered the Texas A&M huddle and delivered the following message: It's gut-check time.

The Aggies, trailing 7-6 to Texas, took possession at their 12-yard line in the fourth quarter. Sixteen plays later, McGee bolted through an opening in the No. 1 rushing defense in the country for an eight-yard touchdown, giving the Aggies their signature victory of 2006 — and of the Dennis Franchione era.

That is the style of play the Aggies are hoping to parlay into even more success in 2007. The players can look back at that drive as a possible launching pad to what happens from here.

Texas A&M converted five third-down opportunities, took nearly nine minutes off the clock and displayed an imposing will that had not been seen by maroon and white fans in years.

The exhausted McGee literally spilled his guts in willing the Aggies to their first win in Austin since 1994. The quarterback vomited during the drive and took one crushing shot after another, adding further validity to his gutsy reputation.

If it wasn't already, the Aggies officially became McGee's team on that day, taking on the quarterback's mentality and never-say-die toughness.

"McGee's the most competitive guy I've ever seen in my life," said A&M senior linebacker Mark Dodge.

"He's the ultimate refuse-to-lose guy. He does a lot of things well, but his best quality is that he's going to do whatever it takes to win. And it isn't just talk with him. He'll make any sacrifice to get the job done. So, when he does say something, he's got everybody's attention."

Like that day in Austin, McGee has something to say as he looks toward the 2007 season. His message: It's closing time.

The Aggies finished off the Longhorns last year and won nine games, but they failed to seal the deal in three conference battles, losing to Oklahoma and Nebraska by one point, and falling to Texas Tech by four. Those six points cost A&M a chance to play for a conference championship.

McGee spent the offseason making sure every teammate is focused on finishing games.

With a loaded offense and an improving defense, the Aggies must develop a knockout punch to avoid further gut shots.

"We were close last year (to winning the Big 12 South), but close isn't good enough," McGee said.

"We have to develop a tougher mental edge at the end of games so that we can find that one point or those 30 seconds that make the difference in winning a close game or losing one. The talent is here to win the Big 12 title; now we have to prove that we have toughness to close things out."

OFFENSE

If there is a sense of urgency in quarterback Stephen McGee's tone, it probably has to do with the realization he will

Stephen McGee Photo by Ronald Martinez/Getty Images

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 206.9 ypg rushing (2nd in Big 12/8th in NCAA), 190.5 ypg passing (11th/72nd), 397.4 ypg total offense (5th/18th), 27.9 ppg (8th/34th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Stephen McGee*	Jr.	Fiery leader who will throw a shoulder or a pass.	Jerrod Johnson, Fr.
RB	Jorvorskie Lane*	Jr.	Part of a dynamic tailback duo.	Mike Goodson, So.
WR	Earvin Taylor*	Sr.	Dependable receiver who has battled injuries.	Michael Corey, Sr.
WR	Kerry Franks	Sr.	Big-play target has the speed to go deep.	Howard Morrow, Jr.
WR	Pierre Brown	Jr.	Improving receiver also a special teams star.	Jamie McCoy, So.
TE	Martellus Bennett*	Jr.	Could be his last year before bolting to the NFL.	Joey Thomas, Sr.
QT	Yemi Babalola	Jr.	Has a nasty streak that coaches love and admire.	Travis Schneider, Jr.*
QG	Kirk Elder*	Sr.	Well-spoken leader of the offensive line.	Michael Shumard, So.
C	Cody Wallace*	Sr.	Gentle giant off the field; kicks butt between lines.	Kevin Matthews, So.
SG	Chris Yoder	Sr.	Returns to starting lineup for first time since 2004.	Lee Grimes, So.
ST	Corey Clark*	Sr.	Has 24 career starts to his credit.	Robbie Frost, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 132.1 ypg rushing (6th in Big 12/55th NCAA), 190.5 passing (4th/44th), 322.6 total defense (4th/46th), 20.5 ppg (5th/44th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Chris Harrington*	Sr.	The most consistent defender who never stops.	Amos Gbunblee, Jr.
DT	Red Bryant*	Sr.	NFL scouts covet his size and strength.	Henry Smith, Sr.
DT	Kellen Heard	So.	Big run-stopper is a load at 6-6, 330.	Lucas Patterson, Fr.
DE	Michael Bennett	Jr.	Less flamboyant than tight end brother, but effective	Cyril Obiozor, Jr.
LB	Misi Tupe*	Sr.	Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year in 2006.	Matt Featherston, So.
LB	Mark Dodge	Sr.	26-year-old got better as the season progressed.	Anthony Lewis, So.
DB	Jordan Pugh	So.	Versatile defensive back ready for impact year.	Japhus Brown, Sr.
CB	Danny Gorrer*	Jr.	Posted 52 tackles in first year as a starter.	Marquis Carpenter, Sr.
CB	Jordan Peterson*	So.	Team leader in passes broken up with eight.	Arkeith Brown, Jr.
SS	Alton Dixon	Jr.	Emerged as a big-time hitter as a sophomore.	Kenny Brown, Fr.
FS	Devin Gregg*	Jr.	Perhaps the new leader of an improving secondary.	Chevar Bryson, So.

*Returning starter

never again be associated with a collegiate offensive line as talented and experienced as this year's unit.

Senior center Cody Wallace and senior guard Kirk Elder return after earning first-team All-Big 12 honors. They are joined by junior Yemi Babalola and senior Corey Clark, a pair of physical veterans. The most likely fifth starter, senior Chris Yoder, has seen action in 29 games.

This is a potentially dominant offensive front ... and the Aggies need to take advantage of it.

McGee has complete confidence in his line, and, as a result, believes he can be an even more effective passer than last year when he completed 62 percent of his passes for 2,295 yards and 12 touchdowns. McGee, who tossed just two interceptions in 313 attempts, also believes the balance of the A&M attack will create nightmares for opponents.

"It's a pick your poison kind of deal, because if you force us to throw, we'll do just that," he said. "But with our running backs and our offensive front, we can also beat teams by grinding it out on the ground. Either way is fine with us."

Prior to the Texas game, A&M was the only team in the nation still averaging 200 yards passing and 200 rushing per game. McGee should continue to improve his passing skills, as senior wide-out Earvin Taylor returns to join one of the best tight end tandems in the country in Martellus Bennett and Joey Thomas.

It is the running game that should truly strike fear into opposing defenses.

Powerful Jorvorskie Lane is virtually unstoppable in short-yardage situations. The 274-pound "J-Train" produced either a first down or a touchdown 26 times on 29 third- or fourth-down carries last year.

Meanwhile, Mike Goodson was the Big 12 Freshman of the Year, rushing for 847 yards and four touchdowns. Goodson features blazing speed with breakneck cutback ability.

DEFENSE

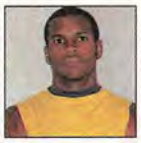
Texas A&M's secondary was the primary concern entering last season after the Aggies finished last nationally in pass defense in 2005.

The '06 Aggies were much improved against the pass (44th nationally), and the

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Derrick Stephens, LB
A true inside linebacker, Stephens showed off athleticism at Cy Falls as a junior and senior. Though he's an inside guy, he has deceptive speed — which assists him in coverage. As he continues to grow and get stronger, Stephens could have an impact early.

Von Miller, DE
A hybrid player, Miller has more upside than most Texas defenders in the Class of 2007. With the frame and athleticism to play linebacker, he could also grow into a pass-rushing defensive end. The talented Miller's skill could earn him early playing time if he can focus on one position.



Bradley Stephens, RB
No one can argue with his production. Stephens accumulated more than 5,000 yards as a high school upperclassman. The nation's No. 12 rated running back, Stephens' size and ability to carry the load could make him a nice counterpart to the running backs already on campus at A&M.

THE SLEEPER

Daniel Baker, OL
A big prospect at 6-6, 285, Baker has the ability to play almost every position along the offensive line. Looking dominant at center, Baker could be a guy that emerges later in his career. Though he didn't have many scholarship offers, the Aggies may have found a sleeper prospect in the Houston area.

Committments	18
Average Stars	3
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	3
★★★☆☆	12
★★☆☆☆	3
Total Stars	54
National Rank: 42	BIG 12: 8

2008 NEEDS

There may not be a more important position in terms of quantity for the Aggies to take in the 2008 class than offensive linemen. With only a select few taken in the 2006 and 2007 classes, look for A&M to target several players who can help them on the offensive front.

— John Talman, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
AVERY, Frank	TE	6-4, 230	★★★	Galveston, TX	Ball
Rivals.com's No. 63 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 31 tight end nationally. ... All-District. ... Had 18 catches for 269 yards as a senior.					
BAKER, Daniel	OL	6-6, 285	★★★	Fort Bend, TX	Elkins
Rivals.com's No. 95 overall prospect in Texas. ... Played every offensive line position in high school. ... Projects as center. ... Two-time first-team All-District. ... Allowed just one sack as a senior. ... All-State.					
BASS, Ben	DE	6-4, 263	★★★	Plano, TX	West
Rivals.com's No. 53 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 26 strongside defensive end nationally. ... All-State honorable mention. ... All-District as an offensive lineman.					
CHAVIS, Billy	ATH	6-4, 220	★★★	Beaumont, TX	Westbrook
Rivals.com's No. 46 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 39 athlete nationally. ... Played quarterback, running back, wide receiver, tight end, linebacker and safety. ... Primarily a defensive player as a senior. ... Honorable mention All-State. ... Had 98 tackles and five sacks as a senior.					
EBBITT, Michael	DE	6-5, 245	★★★	Westlake Village, CA	Oaks Christian
Rivals.com's No. 44 overall prospect in California. ... No. 24 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Played on undefeated Oaks Christian team as a sophomore. ... All-League as a junior.					
EIKE, Evan	OL	6-4, 320	★★★	Bryan, TX	Bryan
Rivals.com's No. 76 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 43 offensive guard nationally. ... Class 5A second-team All-State. ... All-District as a junior. ... Blocked for 1,900-yard running back as a senior.					
HOLLAND, Roger	WR	5-11, 178	★★	Houston, TX	Cy Falls
Played on state runner-up. ... Three-time All-District. ... Had 49 catches for 801 yards and nine touchdowns as a junior. ... Had 41 catches for 620 yards and six touchdowns as a junior. ... Started at receiver and cornerback.					
JOINER, Brandon	DE	6-3, 220	★★★	Killeen, TX	Shoemaker
Rivals.com's No. 57 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 25 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Class 5A All-State. ... Had 93 tackles, seven sacks and three forced fumbles as a senior. ... Two-time All-District.					
MILLER, Von	DE	6-3, 210	★★★★	DeSoto, TX	DeSoto
Rivals.com's No. 29 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 15 weakside defensive end nationally. ... District MVP. ... Had 76 tackles, 14 tackles for a loss and seven sacks as a senior. ... Had 37 tackles, 14 tackles for a loss and seven sacks as a junior.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
SMITH, Lionel	DB	6-1, 180	★★	Bellaire, TX	Bellaire
Enrolled in January. ... Transferred from St. Bernard (La.) for senior season after Hurricane Katrina. ... Started at quarterback at St. Bernard. ... Second-team All-District at cornerback at Bellaire.					
STEPHENS, Bradley	RB	5-10, 185	★★★★	McAllen, TX	Memorial
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 12 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 12 running back nationally. ... *Parade* All-American. ... *USA Today* All-American. ... Two-time first-team All-State. ... Rushed for 7,803 career yards. ... Rushed for 1,875 yards and 23 touchdowns as a senior.					
STEPHENS, Derrick	LB	6-3, 220	★★★	Houston, TX	Cy Falls
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 17 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 5 inside linebacker nationally. ... Class 5A first-team All-State. ... As a senior, had 121 tackles and 18 tackles for a loss. ... Had 106 tackles as a junior.					
TANNEHILL, Ryan	QB	6-4, 193	★★★	Big Spring, TX	Big Spring
Rivals.com's No. 88 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 23 dual-threat quarterback nationally. ... Enrolled in January. ... Passed for 1,258 yards and rushed for 617 as a senior. ... Passed for 1,410 yards and rushed for 822 yards as a junior.					
TRICE, Nick	WR	6-2, 188	★★★	Killeen, TX	Harker Heights
Rivals.com's No. 86 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 63 wide receiver. ... Class 5A All-State. ... Missed junior season with knee injury. ... Caught 23 passes for 457 yards and seven touchdowns as a sophomore.					
TURNAGE, Harold	TE	6-3, 260	★★★	Houston, TX	Chavez
Rivals.com's No. 51 tight end. ... Two-time-first team All-District. ... Caught 27 passes for 325 yards and three touchdowns as a senior. ... Caught 29 passes for 291 yards as a junior.					
WILLIAMS, Brandon	ATH	6-4, 210	★★★★	Beaumont, TX	Central
Rivals250 member. ... Rivals.com's No. 26 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 26 athlete nationally. ... District MVP as junior and senior. ... Primarily played quarterback.... Passed for 1,305 yards and 11 touchdowns. ... Rushed for 1,394 yards as a senior.					
WILLIAMS, Garrick	WR	6-2, 217	★★	DeSoto, TX	DeSoto
Played quarterback, wide receiver and safety. ... Had 25 catches for 436 yards and three touchdowns as a senior. ... Had 19 catches for 250 yards and five touchdowns as a junior.					
YOUNG, Charles	LB	6-3, 215	★★★	Mamou, LA	Mamou
Rivals.com's No. 40 prospect in Louisiana. ... No. 42 inside linebacker nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Had 98 tackles and four fumble recoveries as a senior. ... Had 57 solo tackles and 374 receiving yards as a junior. ... Three-year starter on both sides of the ball.					

AGGIES SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
24	CHRIS ALEXANDER	RB	5-11	242	Sr	Humble
8	MATTHEW ALMARAZ	DB	5-10	194	Jr	San Antonio
71	YEMI BABALOLA	OL	6-4	298	Jr	Bryan
1	JOHNATHAN BATSON	DB	6-1	190	Sr	San Antonio
27	RICHIE BEAN	P/K	6-0	180	Jr	Marrero, LA
13	MARTELLUS BENNETT	TE	6-7	248	Jr	Alief
11	MICHAEL BENNETT	DL	6-4	263	Jr	Alief
88	CODY BEYER	WR	6-1	180	So	San Antonio
3	BEN BITNER	DB	5-5	166	Sr	Round Rock
16	JUSTIN BRANTLY	P	6-4	228	Jr	Sealy
17	BLAINE BRAWLEY	WR	5-11	175	So	Denison
18	ARKEITH BROWN	DB	5-11	170	Jr	El Campo
28	JAPHUS BROWN	DB	5-11	199	Sr	Edna
85	JEREMY BROWN	WR	6-2	205	So	Fort Worth
15	KENNY BROWN	DB	6-2	194	Fr	Oklahoma City, OK
6	PIERRE BROWN	WR	6-2	200	Jr	Duncanville
85	RED BRYANT	DL	6-5	324	Sr	Jasper
30	CHEVAR BRYSON	DB	6-0	185	So	Midland
87	CHRIS CAFLISCH	WR	6-2	182	Fr	San Antonio
80	LORENZO CALLOWAY	WR	5-9	171	Jr	Houston
40	JARRETT CANTU	DL	6-2	230	So	McAllen
13	MARQUIS CARPENTER	DB	6-0	179	Sr	Melbourne, FL
69	EVAN CARSON	DL	5-11	221	So	Allen
54	COREY CLARK	OL	6-6	317	Sr	Spring Branch
22	LATRAEL COOPER	RB	6-0	217	Fr	Cuero
20	MICHAEL COREY	WR	6-4	209	Sr	Delta, UT
47	CORY DAVIS	DS	6-1	247	Jr	Conroe
17	DAVID DELAFOSSE	K	5-11	172	So	Houston
9	ALTON DIXON	DB	5-11	200	Jr	Lufkin
50	MARK DODGE	LB	6-2	222	Sr	Yerington, NV
53	DEREK DUMAS	LB	6-1	220	So	Crawford
64	KIRK ELDER	OL	6-5	298	Sr	Klein
45	RAWLEY FARRELL	DB	6-0	193	Sr	East Bernard
46	MATT FEATHERSTON	LB	6-3	240	So	Poughkeepsie, NY
73	PRICE FERGUSON	OL	6-2	285	Fr	Katy
8	KERRY FRANKS	WR	5-11	196	Sr	Orange
93	PAUL FREENEY	DL	6-3	252	So	Houston
79	ROBBIE FROST	OL	6-6	308	So	Houston
96	NICK FUSCO	DS	6-0	235	Fr	Houston
86	AMOS GBUNBLEE	TE	6-5	250	Jr	Cypress
2	ALEX GENAIDY	DB	6-0	199	Fr	Frisco
52	COREY GIBAS	DS	5-11	215	So	Covina, CA
67	SAM GIESSELMANN	DS	6-4	201	Jr	Arlington
34	MARCUS GOLD	DB	5-7	180	So	Irving
48	WESTON GOOCH	DB	6-0	197	So	Salado
3	MIKE GOODSON	RB	6-0	192	So	Klein
4	DANNY GORRER	DB	6-0	178	Jr	Port Arthur
62	CHANCE GRAY	OL	5-11	260	Fr	Allen
26	DEVIN GREGG	DB	6-0	195	Jr	Spring
74	LEE GRIMES	OL	6-6	310	So	Brownwood
90	GRANT HAGAR	DL	6-0	195	So	San Antonio
92	CHRIS HARRINGTON	DL	6-5	267	Sr	Houston
5	JOHN HARRIS	DB	5-10	163	Fr	Arlington
31	WILL HARRIS	DB	6-1	206	Jr	Lakewood, OH
42	JOHNATHAN HAYNES	LB	6-2	196	Jr	Whittier, CA
91	KELLEN HEARD	DL	6-6	330	So	Wharton
19	CHARLES HEWITT	DB	6-0	210	So	Richmond
29	STEPHEN HODGE	DB	6-1	225	Sr	Richardson
14	CHRIS IVEY	QB	6-2	182	Fr	DeSoto
25	RANDLE JACKSON	WR	6-2	189	So	Alief
1	JERROD JOHNSON	QB	6-6	223	Fr	Humble
16	MICAH JORDAN	QB	6-3	190	Fr	Grapevine
22	JEFF KARR	DB	5-10	195	Jr	Richardson
98	ANDREW KEY	TE	6-4	238	So	Dallas
6	KRISTOPHER KINDRICK	DB	6-0	183	Fr	Houston
24	TYLER KOCIUBA	DB	6-0	190	So	Liberty Hill
55	NICK LAMANTIA	LB	6-1	227	Jr	Mission
11	JORVORSKIE LANE	RB	6-0	274	Jr	Lufkin
21	DAVID LATHAM	DB	6-2	200	Jr	Colleyville
36	ANTHONY LEWIS	LB	6-2	244	So	Haltom City
32	JONATHAN MADSEN	K	6-2	189	Fr	Houston
89	COLIN MARBURGER	WR	6-3	202	Fr	Wimberley
63	KEVIN MATTHEWS	OL	6-4	300	So	Sugar Land
4	JAMIE MCCOY	WR	6-3	224	So	Midland
83	TERRENCE MCCOY	WR	6-4	195	Fr	Midland
7	STEPHEN MCGEE	QB	6-3	208	Jr	Burnet
56	TIM MCKAY	LB	6-0	216	Sr	Texas City
59	MARK METZGER	LB	6-3	234	Fr	Missouri City
5	HOWARD MORROW	WR	6-0	205	Jr	Keller
94	CORY MULTER	TE	6-1	230	So	Garden City
49	CYRIL OBIOZOR	DL	6-5	257	Jr	Pearland
38	RYAN O'BRYANT	RB	5-11	227	So	Houston
78	LUCAS PATTERSON	OL	6-5	306	Fr	Kingsville
28	SCOTT PEGRAM	K	5-11	190	Fr	Plano
68	ERIC PENNINGTON	OL	6-4	315	Fr	Houston
82	ANTONIO PERRY	WR	6-2	171	So	Hammond, LA
27	JORDAN PETERSON	DB	5-10	186	So	Lexington
25	JORDAN PUGH	DB	5-11	190	So	Plano
43	GARY RANDALL	LB	6-0	207	Fr	Buckholts
56	MATT RANKIN	OL	6-2	255	Fr	Houston
69	CRAIG RASCHKE	OL	6-5	231	Fr	Brownwood
44	COLBY RENFRO	LB	5-11	213	Jr	Rockwall
43	JODIE RICHARDSON	LB	6-0	233	So	Duncanville
57	DUSTIN RIEWE	LB	6-0	224	Jr	Elgin
65	SPENCER ROBNETT	DS	6-0	225	Fr	Midland
10	CHARLES ROY	DB	5-11	175	Fr	Richmond
60	JOSH RUSSELL	OL	6-4	328	So	Waxahachie
18	T.J. SANDERS	QB	6-3	206	Sr	Goddard, KS
75	TRAVIS SCHNEIDER	OL	6-8	295	Jr	Bellville
9	E.J. SHANKLE	WR	5-11	177	So	Lufkin
76	MICHAEL SHUMARD	OL	6-5	305	So	Fort Hood
84	CHRIS SMITH	DL	6-4	260	Jr	Allen
95	HENRY SMITH	DL	6-3	307	Sr	Aliceville, AL
26	KEONDRA SMITH	RB	5-9	214	So	Tyler
33	LIONEL SMITH	DB	6-1	180	Fr	Houston
7	MATT SZYMANSKI	P/K	6-1	188	So	College Station
19	RYAN TANNEHILL	QB	6-4	193	Fr	Big Spring
23	CORNELL TARRANT	RB	6-0	192	Fr	Dallas
2	EARVIN TAYLOR	WR	6-3	228	Sr	Mission
32	SAMSON TAYLOR	RB	6-0	205	Jr	The Woodlands
81	JOEY THOMAS	TE	6-5	250	Sr	Austin
41	DEMAURIER THOMPSON	DB	6-1	193	Fr	Dallas
37	MISI TUPE	LB	5-10	250	Sr	St. George, UT
39	CALEB URBAN	DB	6-1	200	Fr	Victoria
91	RYAN VAUGHAN	TE	6-4	240	Jr	Colleyville
29	ANTHONY VELA	RB	5-10	222	Fr	Round Rock
70	CODY WALLACE	OL	6-4	294	Sr	Cuero
66	PHILIP WALTER	OL	6-3	240	Fr	Austin
58	RYAN WHITMER	OL	6-1	242	Fr	Kilgore
97	CODY WILLIAMS	DL	6-4	238	Fr	Longview
80	VINCENT WILLIAMS	DL	6-4	300	So	Dallas
84	DREW WILLIAMSON	WR	6-2	194	Jr	Southlake
10	JEFF WOOD	QB	6-5	210	So	Houston
51	CHRIS YODER	OL	6-3	299	Sr	Houston

NOTEBOOK

Texas A&M has plenty of experience, returning not only 14 full-time starters (eight offense and six defense), but a roster that contains 32 players who have at least one career start.

Offensive lineman **Kirk Elder** heads the list with 35 career starts. Texas A&M has 15 players who have double-digit starts in their career.

"There's a comfort level with our road schedule in knowing that we have a lot of young men who have been in hostile environments before," coach **Dennis Franchione** said. "I don't think we will be uncomfortable going on the road."

• Freshman running back **Cornell Tarrant** was one of the most impressive stars of the spring, turning coaches' heads and rushing for a game-high 117 yards in the spring game.

Tarrant should see some action this year, but it's likely to be limited as he is a backup to All-Big 12 performer **Jorvorskie Lane** and 2006 Big 12 Freshman of the Year **Mike Goodson**.

"We have nothing but playmakers," Tarrant said. "Everyone in the backfield is excellent."

• Despite the Aggies' lopsided loss to Cal (45-10) in the Holiday Bowl last December, Franchione says his team benefited from the experience of going to San Diego. It did not, he said, diminish a breakthrough season for A&M.

"It was disappointing to not play a better game, but we probably played a team that was maybe better than anybody in the Big 12," Franchione said.

"We think about the bowl game and what we could have done to play better to win. But anytime you go into a postseason game you want to see it as a positive — whether it is a positive that you won or a positive that you see what you need to work on and continue to build on."

• Texas A&M failed to have one player selected in the NFL draft, the first time that has happened since 1974. That will change in 2007, when the Aggies figure to have several NFL-ready prospects, including potential early-entry **Martellus Bennett**, a tight end.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
S. McGee	13	134.95	194	313	2	62.0	2295	12	75	176.5
T. Branyon	12	129.43	6	12	1	50.0	98	1	56	8.2

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
M. Goodson	13	127	929	82	847	6.7	4	64	65.2
J. Lane	13	166	740	15	725	4.4	19	25	55.8
S. McGee	13	146	831	165	666	4.6	4	57	51.2

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
C. Schroeder	13	39	612	15.7	4	63	47.1
M. Bennett	13	38	497	13.1	3	75	38.2
L. Riley	13	23	238	10.3	0	35	18.3

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Warren 93, M. Bullitt 82, D. Gregg 64
Interceptions: J. Brown 2, M. Dodge 2, D. Gregg 2, J. Peterson 2
Sacks: C. Harrington 7.5, M. Bennett 2, H. Smith 2
Tackles for loss: C. Harrington 11.5, M. Bullitt 7.5, M. Bennett 6

Results

(9-4, 5-3)

W	Citadel	35-3
W	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE	51-7
W	at Army	28-24
W	LOUISIANA TECH	45-14
L	TEXAS TECH	27-31
W	at Kansas	21-18
W	MISSOURI	25-19
W	at Oklahoma State	OT 34-33
W	at Baylor	31-21
L	OKLAHOMA	16-17
L	NEBRASKA	27-28
W	at Texas	12-7
	Holiday Bowl	
L	vs. California	10-45

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

improvements should continue because almost everyone is back.

The Aggies lost emotional leader Melvin Bullitt, but Japhus Brown, Danny Gorrer and Devin Gregg are proven performers, while sophomore cornerback Jordan Peterson and sophomore Jordan Pugh appear to have star potential.

The concerns regarding the linebacker situation last year were also alleviated by the emergence of junior college transfers Mark Dodge and Misi Tupe. Both players are now seniors after solid debut seasons — Dodge produced 51 tackles and became a big-play specialist, while Tupe (54 tackles) earned Big 12 Defensive Newcomer of the Year honors.

A&M also appears to be developing some impact youngsters in sophomore Anthony Lewis and Matt Featherston.

"We will go into the year with a lot fewer questions defensively than we had last year, especially at the linebackers and secondary," Franchione said.

"Last year, we were changing defenses, and we had three new defensive coaches. Now, our secondary is far more confident, and you look at linebacker with Mark and Misi, (they) are 25- and 26-year-old guys who are very solid. Then you've got Anthony and Matt behind them, which makes you feel good."

Up front, the Aggies not only feel good; they look good, too.

Senior end Chris Harrington is to the defense what McGee is to the offense — a fiery, hard-nosed leader. Harrington, despite battling injuries a year ago, led the team in tackles for losses (11.5) and sacks (7.5).

Tackles Red Bryant and Kellen Heard are monsters inside, while former reserves Cyril Obiozor, Michael Bennett and Henry Smith add tremendous depth and flexibility.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Justin Brantly averaged 44.3 yards per punt (10th nationally), and Kerry Franks

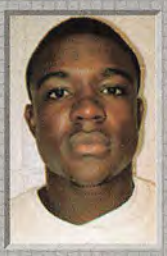
The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Stephen McGee

In addition to all the intangibles McGee brings to the team, he is also remarkably productive. ... McGee was the first quarterback in the nation to surpass 2,000 passing yards and 500 rushing yards last season. ... The junior's ability to protect the football, even while running the option, was one of the keys to A&M's nine wins last year. A&M lost just 13 turnovers, ranking No. 2 nationally. ... McGee was intercepted twice in 313 passing attempts. ... McGee also rushed for 666 yards, helping A&M lead the nation in time of possession.

EMERGING STAR



RB Mike Goodson

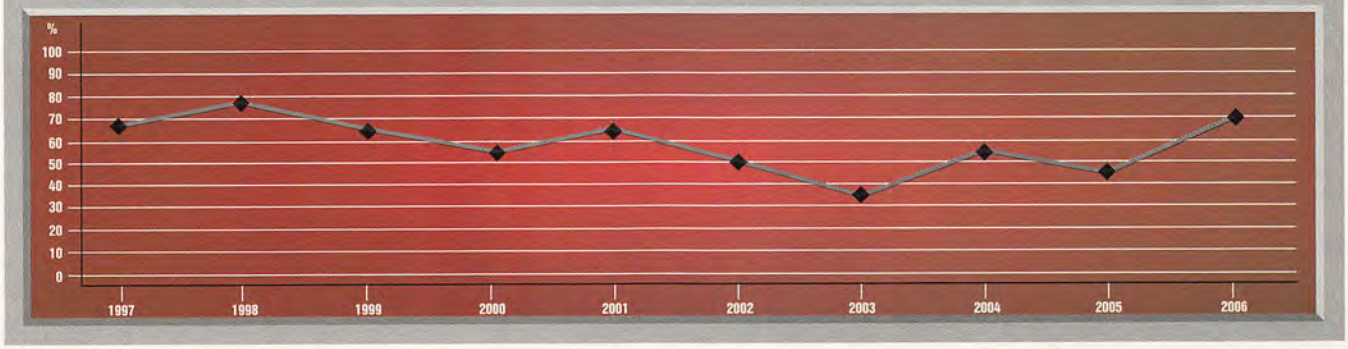
While Jorvorskie Lane often starts the game running over linebackers and terrorizing defensive backs, A&M opponents have the speed of Mike Goodson to defend. Goodson, the Big 12 Freshman of the Year by some publications, has another gear altogether. ... Goodson rushed for 847 yards and four touchdowns last year — the third highest total by a freshman in A&M history. ... He also displayed a knack for big plays, icing the Baylor game with a 64-yard run and giving the Aggies an early lead with a 41-yard burst against Texas. ... Goodson also has nice hands, catching 17 passes for 113 yards.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Jamie McCoy

Although he isn't actually a newcomer (this is McCoy's third season in the program), he is new to his current position (wide receiver), where he can take advantage of his athleticism. The coaches could move McCoy from quarterback because Jerrod Johnson looked so impressive as Stephen McGee's understudy. ... McCoy had an impressive spring. ... He should be a major threat to run reverses and throw passes off reverses.

Texas A&M's Winning Trend 1997-2006



Player Profile

PHOTO BY DOUG HOLLEMAN

Defending Country and Goal Lines

Junior college transfer Mark Dodge sensed last year he would receive plenty of media attention for what he had done in the past.

He was right.

Dodge was an Army solider in the Pentagon filling out paperwork on Sept. 11, 2001, and watching coverage of the World Trade Center attacks when hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the other side of the complex.

Dodge evacuated and joined his unit, which assisted in search-and-recovery efforts.

Dodge, because of his background, anticipated some attention — even if he never emerged as a big-time player at A&M. He was floored by just how many inquiries there were around the five-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

Newspapers from across the country told Dodge's story. So did TV stations and magazines. He was featured prominently on ESPN's College GameDay.

"It was very overwhelming," said Dodge, a 6-2, 222-pound linebacker.

"I did interviews for at least two weeks leading up to 9-11, and I can't even count how many stories were done. It was an honor because I felt like I was representing all those guys in my platoon and, to a larger extent, all the people who participated in the aftermath of the attacks.

"But after a while, I finally had to put an end to the interviews. It was very draining."

His football story is compelling, too.

After four years in the military, the former 170-pound receiver and safety bulked up 35 pounds. He first walked on at Feather River Junior College in Northern California and emerged as a Division I-A prospect.

By the end of the last season, his first at Texas A&M, Dodge's background took a backseat to his backbone status on the defense. In mid-November, Dodge had 17 tackles and an interception against Nebraska, earning Big 12 Defensive Player of the Week honors. Then against Texas, he made two of the biggest plays of the year.

He stopped a fourth-and-1 in the first quarter with the Longhorns at the A&M eight-yard line, and he sealed the 12-7 win with a fourth-quarter interception.

"It was nice to have the media talking to me about how well I was playing and not just my past," Dodge said. "I've always wanted to be a player and not just a player with an interesting background."

Mission accomplished.

and Pierre Brown helped the Aggies go from No. 109 in the country in 2005 to third nationally in kickoff return average (26.1) in '06.

Now the Aggies are hoping placekicker Matt Szymanski, who skipped his senior year in high school to enroll at A&M last fall, will enjoy a more stable sophomore season.

Szymanski, rated as the top high school kicking prospect in the country, struggled early, but finished with a 32-yard field goal in the Holiday Bowl.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The Aggies went unbeaten on the road last year. Duplicating that feat, however, will be a tremendously tall task.

Texas A&M has a non-conference game at Miami and then faces Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri on the road in conference play.

Since the inception of the Big 12 in 1996, A&M has played 15 road games against Texas Tech, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Missouri, compiling a 2-13 record in those trips.

— Rusty Burson

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	MONTANA STATE
Sept. 8	FRESNO STATE
Sept. 15	LOUISIANA-MONROE
Sept. 20	at Miami
Sept. 29	BAYLOR
Oct. 6	OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 13	at Texas Tech
Oct. 20	at Nebraska
Oct. 27	KANSAS
Nov. 3	at Oklahoma
Nov. 10	at Missouri
Nov. 23	TEXAS

30°23'00"N, 86°28'30"W

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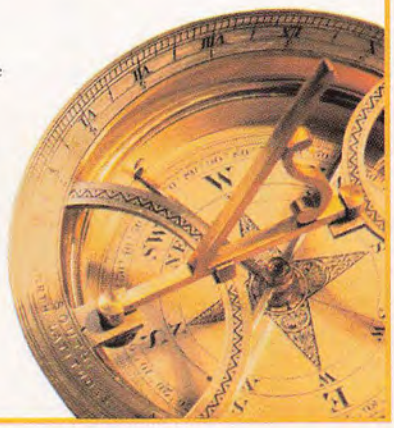

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AT A GLANCE

2006

8-5 overall, 4-4 Big 12 (4th, South)

COACH

Mike Leach — At Texas Tech and overall: 56-33, 7 years

RETURNING STARTERS

9; 4 offense, 5 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Graham Harrell, RB Shannon Woods, IR Danny Amendola, SS Joe Garcia, FS Darcel McBath, DE Jake Ratliff, PK Alex Trlica

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Even with the departure of its top two receivers, Tech is always a threat to lead the nation in passing. QB Graham Harrell could be even more effective this season. The secondary is solid, and PK Alex Trlica is one of the nation's best under pressure.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Tech's defensive front seven has more holes than a block of Swiss cheese, and the offensive line is extremely inexperienced. Finishing the season against Texas and Oklahoma will make it hard to end on a high note.

KEY LOSSES

WR Joel Filani, WR Robert Johnson, DE Keyunta Dawson, DT Chris Hudler, DT Deke Bake, CB Antonio Huffman

OVERVIEW

The Red Raiders are always a dangerous opponent to face, and when their passing game is hitting on all cylinders, Tech can beat virtually anyone. But with so much uncertainty on the offensive and defensive lines, the trenches could eventually be the Red Raiders' undoing.

With Red Raiders, It's Never Over Until It's Over

Texas Tech appears to be rebuilding. Yet, don't count the Red Raiders out.

Nobody should ever do that again after the Red Raiders recovered from a 31-point second-half deficit to pull off the largest comeback in bowl game history with a 44-41 triumph over Minnesota in the Insight Bowl.

The lesson learned: Don't underestimate the folks from Lubbock. That would be a mistake heading into this season with a Texas Tech offense that has proven it can score against virtually anybody, and at any time.

Just ask Minnesota, which led 35-7 at halftime after Texas Tech self-destructed, committing three turnovers. You can only guess the feelings inside the locker room. Gloom? Despair? Hopelessness?

"Nope, none of that," quarterback Graham Harrell recalled.

"We had killed ourselves in the first half, so there was no reason to panic. We knew we had something to prove, and we knew we had the opportunity to shock everyone watching."

They did. The comeback is still reverberating through Lubbock. After Minnesota kicked a field goal to go up 38-7 midway through the third quarter, the Raiders rallied for 31 unanswered points to send the game into overtime on the final play of regulation.

The Red Raiders won in overtime in a game that won't soon be forgotten ... at least that's the hope of the Texas Tech coaching staff.

"When you do something like that, I'd like to hope that the guys truly believe they never are (out of a game)," said coach Mike Leach. "I hope it adds to the belief that, no matter who we're playing or where we're playing, we can always win."

The Raiders might rely on that belief this year. On paper, there are some holes. Tech's offensive line, its receiving corps and its entire front seven on defense have been gutted by graduation. Only four offensive and five defensive starters return from a team that achieved its seventh straight bowl appearance last year.

But the Red Raiders relish being overlooked. They embrace the "no respect" mantra. And, as they did at halftime of the Insight Bowl, they appear to be rallying around the opportunity to shock the world.

Outsiders might look at the personnel losses and conclude that Tech will be hard-pressed to match last year's 8-5 record. Naturally, players believe they will be better than anyone might imagine.

"I don't think there are any limits to the success we can have," said Harrell, the MVP of the Insight Bowl. "It's all about chemistry and belief. Our goals for this season are very high, and we believe that this can be a very memorable season."

Perhaps even as memorable as the Insight Bowl.

OFFENSE

For the first time since 2002, the Raiders will not be pinning their offen-

Shannon Woods Photo by Steve Beyer

JOE GARCIA

PHOTO BY JOHN WILLIAMSON

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 78.4 ypg rushing (11th in Big 12/112th in NCAA), 369.5 ypg passing (1st/3rd), 447.9 ypg total offense (1st/6th), 32.5 ppg (3rd/13th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Graham Harrell*	Jr.	Another in the long line of great Tech quarterbacks.	Taylor Potts, Fr.
RB	Shannon Woods*	Jr.	Versatile, dangerous runner is in Leach's doghouse.	Kobey Lewis, So.
SE	L.A. Reed	Jr.	Played in 13 games and caught 12 passes last year.	Todd Walker, Jr.
IR	Eric Morris	Jr.	Averaged almost 14 yards per catch as sophomore.	Kelly Hildebrandt, Sr.
IR	Danny Amendola*	Sr.	Most experienced receiver and a special team star.	Grant Walker, Sr.
FL	Edward Britton	So.	Displayed big-play potential during freshman year.	Mike Crabtree, Fr.
LT	Marlon Winn	So.	One of numerous newcomers on offensive line.	Chris Olson, Fr.
LG	Louis Vasquez*	Jr.	Only returning starter up front can be dominant.	Adrian Archie, Fr.
C	Shawn Byrnes	So.	Big frame (6-3, 303), but very little experience.	Justin Keown, Fr.
RG	Stephen Hamby	Jr.	Former walk-on has moved up the ladder.	Brandon Carter, So.
RT	Rylan Reed	Jr.	Former minor league baseball player hits it big.	Andrew Johnson, So.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 151.1 ypg rushing (10th in Big 12/86th NCAA), 182.4 passing (1st/32nd), 333.5 total defense (6th/58th), 25.1 ppg (8th/76th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Jake Ratliff*	Jr.	Rangy end contributed 50 tackles and 3.5 sacks.	Brandon Williams, So.
NT	Rajon Henley	So.	Won the job with an impressive spring.	Brian Jones, So.
DT	Richard Jones	So.	Needs to step up quickly to fill potential void.	Britton Barbee, Fr.
DE	Tyler Yenzer	Sr.	Solid, but lacks the explosiveness he had in '06.	Sandy Riley, So.
LB	Kellen Tillman*	Sr.	Sixth-year linebacker finished with 41 tackles last year.	Brian Duncan, Fr.
LB	Paul Williams	Sr.	Started six games last year and had 30 stops.	Victor Hunter, So.
LB	Chad Hill	Sr.	Another first-year starter in the front seven.	Marlon Williams, So.
CB	Jamar Wall	So.	Good athlete is only new starter in secondary.	De'Shon Sanders, Jr.
CB	Chris Parker*	Sr.	Posted 50 tackles in first year as starter.	Marcus Bunton, Jr.
SS	Joe Garcia*	Sr.	Hard-hitting leader of the defense.	Anthony Hines, Jr.
FS	Darcel McBath*	Jr.	Excellent athlete who intercepted three passes.	Lance Fuller, Jr.

*Returning starter

sive hopes on a new quarterback. Graham Harrell is back in the saddle after what was, for the most part, a spectacular sophomore season. He threw for 4,555 yards and 38 touchdowns last season, often displaying the poise of a seasoned veteran.

There were bumps in the road — primarily in losses against TCU, Missouri and Colorado — but Harrell finished strong, passing for 519 yards against Texas in late October and 445 yards in the comeback win over Minnesota.

"Graham Harrell is very good," Texas coach Mack Brown said. "A lot of times we were covering (their receivers) and (Harrell was) sticking it in there. When Texas Tech is moving the ball and they're hot, they're as good as anybody in the country on offense."

A big part of that red-hot offense was running back Shannon Woods, who led the team in rushing with 926 yards and led the Big 12 in all-purpose yardage with 139 yards per game. Woods is a dynamic big-play threat ... when he's not in Leach's doghouse.

Leach publicly criticized Woods' work ethic in the spring and made him third on the depth chart behind Kobey Lewis and walk-on Ryan Hayes. But for Tech's offense to be at its best, the Raiders need a proven threat like Woods. Lewis is explosive, but at 5-5, 173 pounds, his durability is a question.

There are also a number of concerns along the line, where only left guard Louis Vasquez returns from a unit that allowed just one sack for every 38 pass attempts last year. And at receiver, Tech must replace two of its most reliable horses in Joel Filani and Robert Johnson.

The Raiders return one proven receiving target in senior Danny Amendola. Junior L.A. Reed (23 career catches), redshirt freshman Mike Crabtree, sophomore Edward Britton and junior Eric Morris (35 career receptions) must step up quickly.

DEFENSE

The strength of Tech's defense appears to be its secondary, where three of four starters return from a unit that led the Big 12 by allowing opponents just

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Jacob Amie, WR
With the body of a tight end but the elusiveness of a receiver, no prospect may have a bigger impact as a freshman than Amie. His presence at receiver in Mike Leach's offense should cause many mismatches. That potential may put him on the map early in Lubbock.

Lonnie Edwards, OL
Edwards, who was a long-time Baylor commit, switched to the Red Raiders and could be an offensive lineman that makes an early move up the depth chart. A strong blocker who is physically prepared for the next level, Edwards looks great as a guard in a spread offense.

Detron Lewis, WR
Hailed as one of the best route-running receivers in the state of Texas, Lewis doesn't have the size of a prospect like Amie. A leader for his high school team, Lewis should have no problem carrying a big load as a freshman at Tech. His quickness and leaping ability should make him one to watch early.

THE SLEEPER

Bobby Agoucha, DT
One of the biggest defensive tackles in physical stature and in potential, the Oklahoma City Putnam City North prospect was one of most under-the-radar targets in the 2007 class. Texas Tech came in late and may have found a big gem. With depth issues at defensive tackle, Agoucha could be a force early.

Committments	26
Average Stars	2.73
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	1
★★★☆☆	17
★★☆☆☆	8
Total Stars	71
National Rank: 52	Big 12: 10

2008 NEEDS

While Tech will obviously continue to target quarterbacks and receivers, defense will be a big focus in the upcoming class. Adding more scholarship defensive tackles will be important. The Red Raiders also need help at linebacker and safety in the coming years.

— John Talman, Rivals.com

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
AGOUCHA, Bobbie	DT	6-4, 300	✪✪	Oklahoma City, OK	Putnam City N.
Played in only four games as a senior after transferring from Katy (Texas) High. ... Had 18 tackles and three sacks.					
AMIE, Jacob	WR	6-4, 224	✪✪✪	Tyler, TX	Lee
Rivals.com's No. 49 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 46 wide receiver nationally. ... Class 5A All-State honorable mention. ... Had 22 catches for 416 yards and three touchdowns as a senior.					
BIRD, Bront	DB	6-4, 201	✪✪✪	Odessa, TX	Permian
First-team All-District at wide receiver and strong safety. ... Had 73 tackles, seven tackles for a loss and three interceptions as a senior. ... Had 824 receiving yards and eight touchdowns.					
CASTILLO, Omar	OL	6-6, 310	✪✪	Roswell, NM	Goddard
Rivals.com's No. 8 overall prospect in New Mexico. ... First-team All-State defensive tackle.					
CHARBONNET, Taylor	ATH	5-9, 164	✪✪✪	The Woodlands, TX	
Class 5A All-State honorable mention. ... Had 28 tackles and four interceptions as a senior. ... Had 53 tackles and two interceptions as a junior. ... Also standout return specialist.					
CRAWFORD, Aaron	RB	5-11, 200	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Ridgeway
Rivals.com's No. 19 prospect in Tennessee. ... No. 60 running back nationally. ... Mr. Football in Class 5A. ... Rushed for over 1,600 yards and 17 scores as a senior.					
DELPECHE, Dominique	OL	6-7, 338	✪✪	Fort Worth, TX	North Crowley
Didn't play football until 2006. ... Standout basketball player.					
EDWARDS, Lonnie	OL	6-5, 305	✪✪✪✪	Brownsboro, TX	Brownsboro
Rivals.com's No. 32 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 24 offensive tackle. ... Class 3A all-state. ... Blocked for team that rushed for more than 3,300 yards.					
EMERT, Blake	OL	6-5 275	✪✪✪	Garland, TX	Sachse
Rivals.com's No. 66 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 44 offensive tackle nationally. ... Class 5A first-team All-State.					
FEHOKO, Sam	DE	6-2, 220	✪✪✪	Honolulu, HI	Farrington
Rivals.com's No. 3 prospect in Hawaii. ... No. 22 weakside defensive end nationally. ... Had 22.5 sacks as a senior.					
FLANNEL, Jared	RB	6-0, 180	✪✪✪	Brazoria, TX	Columbia
Rivals.com's No. 80 overall prospect in Texas. ... No. 38 running back nationally. ... District MVP as sophomore and junior.					
FRANKS, Jacoby	WR	6-0, 170	✪✪✪	Orange, TX	West-Orange Stark
First-team All-District. ... Had 48 catches for 606 yards as a senior.					
GOOCH, Jerrod	OL	6-4, 290	✪✪✪	Vidor, TX	Vidor
Rivals.com No. 50 offensive guard. ... Bench press of 400 pounds, squat of nearly 500 pounds.					

Name	Pos.	Ht., Wt.	Stars	Hometown	School
HAWK, Rashad	WR	6-3, 180	✪✪✪	Copperas Cove, TX	
First-team All-District. ... Caught 56 passes for 756 yards and six touchdowns as a senior. ... Played on state championship team.					
HOWARD, Daniel	DE	6-3, 240	✪✪	El Dorado, KS	Butler CC
Played on conference championship team. ... Had 55 tackles, 14 tackles for a loss and 12 sacks at Butler. ... Redshirted as freshman.					
KEOWN, Justin	OL	6-4, 280	✪✪	Anderson, SC	Hargrave Military
Enrolled in January. ... Played high school football at Anderson (S.C.) Woodside.					
LaCOUR, Jonathan	K	6-2, 190	✪✪	Kingwood, TX	Kingswood
First-team All-District. ... Averaged 40.7 yards per punt. ... Had long field goal of 54 yards.					
LEWIS, Detron	WR	6-0, 190	✪✪✪	College Station, TX	Consolidated
Rivals.com's No. 85 prospect in Texas. ... No. 62 wide receiver nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Caught 39 passes for 776 yards and seven touchdowns as a senior.					
LOUCKS, Stefan	QB	6-2, 185	✪✪	Little Rock, AR	Pulaski Academy
Passed for 13,701 career yards and 147 touchdowns. ... All-time passing leader in Arkansas history. ... Led team to Class 5A state championship.					
NEILL, David	DE	6-5, 244	✪✪✪	Flower Mound, TX	Marcus
Rivals.com's No. 63 strongside defensive end nationally. ... First-team All-District. ... Had 81 tackles and six sacks as a senior.					
OKAFOR, Mickey	OL	6-6, 290	✪✪✪	Houston, TX	Westbury
First-team All-District. ... Started 30 career games.					
SANDERS, De'Shon	DB	6-2, 205	✪✪✪	San Francisco	City College of San Francisco
Rival's.com's No. 66 junior college prospect. ... Enrolled in January. ... Had 28 tackles and two interceptions as a senior.					
SHARPE, Brandon	DE	6-4, 240	✪✪	Fresno, CA	Fresno CC
Had 36 tackles and nine sacks as a senior. ... Teams won by an average of 23 points.					
SONIER, Tyrone	DE	6-2, 225	✪✪✪	Missouri City, TX	Fort Bend Marshall
Rivals.com's No. 97 prospect in Texas. ... Second-team All-State. ... Had 92 tackles with 10.5 sacks as a senior.					
SWINDALL, Tramain	WR	6-2, 163	✪✪✪	Oklahoma City, OK	Millwood
Rivals.com's No. 5 prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 54 wide receiver nationally. ... Second-team All-State. ... Had over 1,000 receiving yards and 11 scores as a senior.					
WHITLOCK, Colby	DT	6-3, 290	✪✪✪	Noble, OK	
Rivals.com's No. 17 prospect in Oklahoma. ... No. 69 defensive tackle nationally. ... First-team All-State. ... Had 109 tackles, 24 tackles for a loss, 11 forced fumbles and three sacks as a senior.					

RED RAIDERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Class	Hometown
29	SAM AHOLO	DB	5-11	208	So	Keller
20	DANNY AMENDOLA	IR	5-11	177	Sr	The Woodlands
62	ADRIAN ARCHIE	OL	6-5	313	Fr	Huntsville
68	BRITTON BARBEE	DT	6-2	270	Fr	Abilene
25	BARON BATCH	RB	5-10	190	So	Midland
82	GRANT BERG	P	6-5	198	Jr	Houston
61	MICHAEL BETTENHAUSEN	DS	6-2	270	Sr	Plano
89	BRIK BRINKER	WR	6-1	173	Fr	Wolfforth
27	EDWARD BRITTON	WR	6-0	177	So	El Paso
	BUDDY BRUMIT	OL	6-3	304	Fr	Garland
1	MARCUS BUNTON	CB	5-8	196	Jr	Taylor
68	LANDON BURGE	OL	6-2	282	So	Leander
50	AUSTIN BURNS	DS	5-10	244	So	Midland
64	SHAWN BYRNES	OL	6-3	317	So	Phoenix, AZ
60	BRANDON CARTER	OL	6-6	356	So	Longview
10	DANIEL CHARBONNET	S	6-0	195	Jr	The Woodlands
35	BLAKE COLLIER	S	6-2	194	So	Justin
34	JAMES CONWRIGHT	CB	5-10	176	Sr	Lubbock
5	MICHAEL CRABTREE	WR	6-2	208	Fr	Dallas
57	BRIAN DUNCAN	LB	6-2	228	Fr	Baton Rouge, LA
85	SEAN ESTELLE	DE	6-2	240	Fr	Missouri City
37	CORY FOWLER	K	5-8	160	Jr	The Woodlands
24	LANCE FULLER	S	6-0	218	Jr	Smithson Valley
49	JOE GARCIA	S	6-1	217	Sr	Clovis, NM
84	J.J. GRIFFIN	WR	5-10	206	Jr	Odessa
50	RYAN HALE	LB	6-0	219	So	Baytown
71	STEPHEN HAMBY	OL	6-3	280	Jr	San Antonio
6	GRAHAM HARRELL	QB	6-3	197	Jr	Ennis
28	STEVEN HARRIS	S	5-11	184	Fr	Lewisville
23	RYAN HAYES	RB	5-6	161	So	Lubbock
91	RAJON HENLEY	DT	6-3	258	So	Galveston
85	KELLY HILDEBRANDT	IR	5-8	179	Sr	Lubbock
54	CHAD HILL	LB	6-1	229	Sr	Lubbock
23	ANTHONY HINES	S	6-1	236	Jr	Denison
32	LANDON HOEFER	WR	6-0	197	So	Abilene
47	JULIUS HOWARD	LB	6-0	223	Fr	Irving
52	VICTOR HUNTER	LB	5-10	260	So	Irving
26	ADAM JAMES	TE	6-3	222	Fr	Celina
61	ANDREW JOHNSON	OL	6-4	304	So	Houston
90	BRIAN JONES	DT	6-2	292	So	Everman
94	PHILLIP JONES	DE	6-4	242	So	Lewisville
97	RICHARD JONES	DT	6-2	285	So	LaMarque
28	SHANE JONES	WR	5-11	194	Fr	Kerrville
53	JUSTIN KEOWN	C	6-4	280	Fr	Anderson, SC
83	LYLE LEONG	WR	6-0	168	Fr	Abilene
21	KOBEY LEWIS	RB	5-5	173	So	Abilene
59	TY LINDER	LB	6-2	215	Sr	Austin
7	DARCEL MCBATH	S	6-1	196	Jr	Gainesville
37	FRANKLIN MITCHEM	S	6-2	185	Fr	Klein
75	OFA MOHETAU	OL	6-3	362	Sr	Euless
12	LARON MOORE	DB	5-9	186	Fr	Midwest City, OK
12	ERIC MORRIS	IR	5-8	174	Jr	Shallowater
33	BRENT NICKERSON	CB	6-0	174	So	Irving
83	TRENT NICKERSON	CB	6-3	192	Fr	Irving
77	CHRIS OLSON	OL	6-5	298	Fr	Dallas
17	CHRIS PARKER	CB	5-10	178	Sr	Dallas
15	TAYLOR POTTS	QB	6-5	210	Fr	Abilene
98	JAKE RATLIFF	DE	6-8	250	Jr	Lawton, OK
18	TAYLOR READ	S	6-1	231	Sr	O'Donnell
86	L.A. REED	IR	6-2	201	Jr	Conroe
74	RYLAN REED	OL	6-6	285	Jr	Dallas
80	ADRIAN REESE	TE	6-6	203	So	Longview
31	PETE RICHARDSON	CB	5-9	185	So	Muskogee, OK
46	SANDY RILEY	LB	6-1	257	So	Houston
38	JORDY ROWLAND	S	6-0	190	Jr	Nazareth
16	RYAN ROWLAND	QB	6-3	212	Sr	Midland
11	DE'SHON SANDERS	DB	6-2	205	Jr	San Francisco, CA
29	DAVID SCHAEFER	IR	6-3	227	Sr	Cisco
18	STEVEN SHEFFIELD	QB	6-4	185	Fr	Pflugerville
10	CHRISTIAN STERLING	WR	6-1	188	Fr	Houston
86	CLINT STOFFELS	DT	5-11	248	Fr	Gainesville
40	NATHAN STONE	DB	5-8	170	Fr	Lubbock
79	GARY TAYLOR	OL	6-5	245	So	Wolfforth
	JESS THOMISON	DT	6-2	255	Fr	Hutto
56	KELLEN TILLMAN	LB	6-2	240	Sr	Plano
30	ALEX TRLICA	K	5-11	176	Sr	Friendswood
65	LOUIS VASQUEZ	OL	6-6	341	Jr	Corsicana
26	LASHAWN VATION	S	5-9	170	So	Irving
19	GRANT WALKER	IR	6-0	189	Sr	Pflugerville
4	TODD WALKER	WR	6-1	178	Jr	Pflugerville
3	JAMAR WALL	DB	5-10	194	So	Plainview
58	CHRIS WALLACE	LB	5-10	220	So	Grapevine
87	GERRID WARNER	DS	6-7	216	Sr	Oak Harbor, WA
16	LOY WHITE	S	5-8	192	Sr	Georgetown
84	BRANDON WILLIAMS	DE	6-3	243	So	Fort Worth
87	DAITRIC WILLIAMS	WR	6-4	215	Fr	Missouri City
39	MARLON WILLIAMS	LB	5-11	225	So	Pflugerville
48	PAUL WILLIAMS	LB	6-1	221	Sr	Tyler
67	MARLON WINN	OL	6-5	324	So	Waxahachie
2	SHANNON WOODS	RB	5-11	190	Jr	McKinney
89	TYLER YENZER	DE	6-4	244	Sr	Midland

NOTEBOOK

Texas Tech's offensive line allowed only 16 sacks last year, the fewest total in **Mike Leach's** seven-year tenure as the head coach. But things could be much tougher on quarterback **Graham Harrell** in 2007, as the Raiders replace four starters along the line.

An even bigger problem for Tech's long-term offensive line prognosis is a lack of quality depth. Tech has missed on many offensive line recruits in recent years. For one reason or another, 11 of the 21 offensive linemen the Raiders signed between 2003 and 2006 are no longer on the roster.

Tech attempted to address that situation during the latest recruiting season, signing seven offensive line prospects in February.

- Tech's 2007 signing class featured an unusually high number of out-of-state prospects, with 10 of the 25 signees hailing from outside the Lone Star State's borders. Linebacker **Sam Fehoko** came from Farrington High School in Honolulu. The recruiting experts, however, were not impressed with Tech's haul. Rivals.com rated the Raiders' class 52nd in the country.
- Chris Todd, who served as Graham Harrell's backup last season, transferred to a junior college at mid-term, while Arizona State transfer Derek Shaw left the Tech program because of family issues. Those moves opened the backup quarterback role to redshirt freshman **Taylor Potts.** The 6-5 Potts performed well in the spring, earning regular praises from Leach.
- Texas Tech was the most penalized team in the Big 12 last season. The Raiders were penalized 96 times for 856 yards, an average of 65.8 yards per game, which was 30 yards more per game than the league's least penalized team, Iowa State.
- As a true freshman in 2004, **Danny Amendola** returned a punt 90 yards for a touchdown against Kansas State and averaged a whopping 12.8 yards per punt return. But opposing special teams have paid special attention to stopping Amendola from busting the big play. His average has gone down in each of the past two years, dropping to 9.2 yards per return last season.

Individual Stats

PASSING

Name	G	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Long	Yds/G
G. Harrell	13	145.55	412	617	11	66.8	4555	38	76	350.4
C. Todd	5	138.70	25	35	0	71.4	241	1	48	48.2

RUSHING

Name	G	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
S. Woods	13	152	958	32	926	6.1	10	51	71.2
B. Batch	6	9	46	3	43	4.8	1	13	7.2
J. Filani	13	4	34	0	34	8.5	0	14	2.6

RECEIVING

Name	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Yds/G
J. Filani	13	91	1300	14.3	13	76	100.0
R. Johnson	12	89	871	9.8	11	37	72.6
S. Woods	13	75	572	7.6	2	54	44.0

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: Slay 114, Session 81, Naziruddin 66
Interceptions: D. McBath 3, C. Parker 2, A. Huffman 2, B. Stratton 2
Sacks: D. Bake 6.5, K. Dawson 6, C. Hudler 4, J. Ratliff 3.5, B. Williams 3.5
Tackles for loss: K. Dawson 7.5, C. Hudler 7, J. Ratliff 7

Results

(8-5, 4-4)

W	SMU	35-3
W	at Texas-El Paso	OT 38-35
L	at TCU	3-12
W	SE LOUISIANA	62-0
W	at Texas A&M	31-27
L	MISSOURI	21-38
L	at Colorado	6-30
W	at Iowa State	42-26
L	TEXAS	31-35
W	BAYLOR	55-21
L	at Oklahoma	24-34
W	OKLAHOMA STATE	30-24
	Insight Bowl	
W	vs. Minnesota	OT 44-41

PHOTO BY STEVE BEYER

182.4 passing yards per game. Hard-hitting strong safety Joe Garcia, who contributed 87 tackles last season, is a physical presence who can make tackles anywhere on the field.

Free safety Darcel McBath also is a proven playmaker, picking off three passes last year, while cornerback Chris Parker had 50 tackles and six passes broken up in '06. The lone newcomer in a starting role will be at left corner, where sophomore Jamar Wall appears to have the inside track on replacing Antonio Huffman.

While the secondary looks solid, the front seven is far more suspect. Tech will undoubtedly miss sack specialist Keyunta Dawson up front, although Jake Ratliff, Tyler Yenzer and Brandon Williams are solid players on the ends. Sophomore nose tackle Rajon Henley performed well in the spring, but the tackle positions are a key concern.

Sixth-year senior Kellen Tillman is the only full-time returning starter among the linebacker corps. Senior Paul Williams and senior Chad Hill likely will fill the other two starting spots, while Blake Collier and Julius Howard provide solid depth. It appears to be a solid linebacker unit, but not spectacular.

With the exception of the two safeties, the same could be said for the entire Tech defense.

SPECIAL TEAMS

In terms of clutch performers, the Raiders possess an ace in placekicker Alex Trlica.

He booted a career-long 52-yard field goal on the final play of regulation to send the Insight Bowl into overtime, and his 49-yard field goal in overtime against UTEP also gave the Raiders a victory. Trlica is consistent inside 40 yards (13 of 16 last season). He holds the NCAA record with 167 consecutive extra points without a miss.

Danny Amendola is an exciting return specialist, with a career average of better

The BEST & The BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Graham Harrell

Mike Leach tried to stir the pot in the spring, saying it wasn't a given Harrell was the starting quarterback, but the junior took it in stride and played well throughout the spring. ... Harrell tossed 38 touchdown passes last season as a first-year starter, and showed his poise in dramatic comeback wins in two of his first three road trips (UTEP and Texas A&M) ... His pocket presence improved at the end of the year ... Had nine games with at least 300 yards passing.

EMERGING STAR

SS Joe Garcia

Burst onto the scene as a junior, finishing with 87 tackles and earning All-Big 12 honors. He had only 16 tackles a year earlier. ... Garcia (6-2, 215) is one of the most physical defensive backs in the Big 12. ... Tech coaches had considered moving him to linebacker in the spring, but decided he was too valuable in the secondary. ... Garcia recorded double-digit tackle totals three times in 2006.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Michael Crabtree

The redshirt freshman displayed athleticism at quarterback at Carter High School in Dallas, but it didn't take him long to prove he could make an even bigger impact catching the football than throwing it. Last season, Crabtree starred on the scout team, often imitating the opponent's top receiver. ... Was explosive in the spring game, catching passes of 43 and 52 yards, finishing with three catches for 112 yards.

Player Profile

PHOTO BY DOUG HOLLEMON

Texas Kid Shows A Bit of Montana

Quarterback Graham Harrell and his two brothers spent countless hours while growing up in small Texas towns throwing the football in their backyard and dreaming of big things.

Graham, for example, dreamed of becoming the next Joe Montana, leading his team to improbable comebacks with his poise and pocket presence.

Considering how Harrell orchestrated the improbable comeback in the Insight Bowl, it would be safe to say he is living out some childhood fantasies.

Harrell engineered a 31-point comeback against Minnesota last December, the largest in bowl history. He capped it off by leading the Raiders to an overtime touchdown and a 44-41 win over Minnesota, earning MVP honors in the process.

The comeback over the Gophers, as well as the 4,555 passing yards throughout the year, is a source of pride for the junior. Not because Harrell is particularly enamored by numbers, but because he enjoys dispelling myths.

Growing up in Texas, Harrell used to hear how the Lone Star State couldn't produce big-time passing quarterbacks. He is now part of the proof that Texans can wing it with the best of them.

"I heard about that growing up," said Harrell, who became Texas' all-time leading prep passer by throwing for 12,532 yards at Ennis High School.

"I always had to laugh when I heard that, because most of the colleges in the state just weren't really focused on throwing the football. That's why there weren't a lot of Texans playing quarterback in the pros, which is where that whole thing started.

"But look around the Big 12 now; you have a lot of Texas guys putting up big numbers throwing the ball. Look at Chase Daniel at Missouri, Colt McCoy at Texas, etc. There are plenty of Texas high school products who can throw it."

Harrell struggled midway through his sophomore season, tossing a total of six interceptions in back-to-back losses to Missouri and Colorado. Harrell came back to deliver 19 touchdowns and just four interceptions in his final six games.

His personal growth was obvious, and he expects the improvement to continue in his second year as the Tech starting quarterback.

"I did some good things last year, and I had my struggles," Harrell said. "But the big thing is that I learned a lot. Being in different situations gives me a lot of confidence heading into this year. Last year was just the start."

than 10 yards per punt return. The major special teams concern is at punter, where Alex Reyes left with the school's best career average (43.3). Tech is hoping true freshman Jonathan LaCour can assume Reyes' duties.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Tech opens with three of its first four games on the road, including a key early Big 12 game on Sept. 22 at Oklahoma State. If the Raiders can survive those early road trips unscathed, they have a chance to make an early statement in the league standings.

It's not inconceivable Tech could be 6-0 when Texas A&M visits Lubbock, where the Raiders have not lost to the Aggies since 1993. Tech also will have a chance to extract some revenge at home on Oct. 27 against Colorado. The Buffs handed the Raiders a 30-6 loss last year, their most embarrassing setback of the season.

Tech's finishing stretch is brutal with the Raiders playing at Texas and home against Oklahoma to end the season.

— Rusty Burson

SCHEDULE

Sept. 3	at SMU
Sept. 8	UTEP
Sept. 15	at Rice
Sept. 22	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 29	NORTHWESTERN STATE
Oct. 6	IOWA STATE
Oct. 13	TEXAS A&M
Oct. 20	at Missouri
Oct. 27	COLORADO
Nov. 3	at Baylor
Nov. 10	at Texas
Nov. 17	OKLAHOMA

FALCONS

AT A GLANCE

2006

4-8 overall, 3-5 MWC (7th)

COACH

Troy Calhoun — At Air Force and overall: 1st year

RETURNING STARTERS

10; 4 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Shaun Carney, WR Chad Hall, LB Drew Fowler, LB John Rabold, FS Bobby Giannini

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The offense will carry the element of surprise with Calhoun providing a major update to the attack. The Falcons draw some MWC opponents early in the season, so there won't be much film to study. Solid experience on defense, except on the line. Calhoun has experience in the NFL (most recently Houston Texans offensive coordinator) and an Air Force background.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

It will be a learning year for players and coaches. No one will have to adjust more than fourth-year starting quarterback Shaun Carney as he leaves his comfort zone of the triple option.

KEY LOSSES

OT Robert Kraay, PK Zach Sasser, DE Gilberto Perez, CB Chris Sutton

OVERVIEW

If nothing else, it will be interesting to see how Shaun Carney adjusts to and develops in the new offense. A new staff generally brings new energy to a program, and while the Falcons could surprise some teams, AFA doesn't figure to contend just yet after several down years.

Offense Has a New Way of Flying Under Calhoun

OFFENSE

The triple option and Fisher DeBerry were synonymous with Air Force football for nearly a quarter of a century. The Falcons finished out of the national Top 10 in rushing once during the span.

But with fading fortunes in recent seasons, DeBerry retired and in came Troy Calhoun, who returned to his alma mater. Ten of 12 members of his staff had prior stops at AFA as either a player or assistant coach ... but this won't be the same old Air Force team.

Calhoun came at a good time, inheriting the most experienced quarterback in the Mountain West. Senior Shaun Carney, who earned his first starting role as a freshman, is eager to expand his horizons in his final season.

With 5,824 total career offensive yards, Carney trails only AFA quarterback icons Dee Dowis and Beau Morgan on the Academy's all-time list. He needs a little over 800 yards to move into first place.

Calhoun has thrown every alignment at the Falcons. In the spring game, AFA variously lined up in shotgun, I-formation, spread looks and some one-back.

"He's picked it up rather smoothly," Calhoun said of Carney. "We'll still run the football, but we'll complement it with a little more efficient ways to throw."

Gone are the halfback positions. A tailback is now listed along with two wide receivers.

Chad Hall, the fourth-leading rusher in the MWC last season, moves to a slot position to take advantage of his receiving skills. The player who helped himself the most in the spring was senior Jim Ollis, a part-time backup QB who looked good at the new tailback position.

Sophomore wide receiver Sean Quintana emerged in the spring, and there are three tight ends who will draw looks. Last year's tight end leader, senior Travis Dekker, had just four catches for 40 yards.

DEFENSE

There will be no seismic changes in defensive philosophy. A good place to start is with senior linebacker Drew Fowler, who led the MWC in tackles with a 10.2 average. He missed spring with a broken bone in his hand.

The old "Falcon back" — or fifth defensive back — reverts to an outside linebacker spot. The veteran linebacking corps also returns John Rabold, the team's second leading tackler.

Senior free safety Bobby Giannini is the other returning standout on defense. Sophomore strong safety Chris Thomas made a quick impression during spring.

Only one defensive lineman returns in end Jake Paulson.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Air Force must replace a kicker, punter and holder. Junior Ryan Harrison was in line for both kicking jobs last season before he was placed on an Academy suspension for the year. He looked promising in the spring. The Falcons have placed a priority through the years on blocked kicks. They blocked five PATs and two punts last season.

— Natalie Meisler

Recent History Says Perfection is Key to MWC Glory

The Mountain West Conference is a study in moving targets.

Every year, league coaches predict no team will get through the MWC unscathed. For the past three years, one team keeps defying those predictions ... Utah, TCU and BYU have rolled up consecutive perfect league marks.

And then the defending champ falls victim to the target.

It's BYU's turn in 2007, and the Cougars no longer have star quarterback John Beck to return the arrows.

"In anticipation back in January, we went into the offseason introducing the theme of raising the bar," said Cougars third-year coach Bronco Mendenhall, who has restored the program to the level enjoyed under stadium namesake LaVell Edwards.

"We know it's going to take more in terms of effort, dedication, execution and position mastery. We anticipate being the target and we've taken the right measures, I believe."

Count on the Cougars being in the MWC race ... just don't forget about 2005 champ TCU with its intimidating defense, or Utah with a healthy Brian Johnson, who handled mop-up for the Utes' unbeaten 2004 outfit.

"Everyone is trying to catch TCU and BYU, with Utah and Wyoming hot on their heels," said Wyoming coach Joe Glenn.

Air Force's Troy Calhoun, the lone MWC coaching newcomer, studied enough film in his prior NFL life to know "TCU and BYU are the standouts."

After that, much depends on the MWC's All-ACL team — Utah's Johnson and Colorado State's Kyle Bell.

Johnson was No. 4 nationally in total offense at 337 yards a game in 2005 when he tore his ACL late in the season. Ute coach Kyle Whittingham reported him looking better than ever with 18 months to rehab from surgery. Colorado State was so fragile without Bell that the Rams plunged to seven straight losses and any number of marks for offensive futility.

BYU, TCU and Utah have the resources, coaching and recent tradition. But every one knows San Diego State and UNLV can't stay down permanently, and New Mexico is always dangerous and has one of the league's brightest young quarterback prospects in Donovan Porterie.

Air Force represents the unknown under Calhoun and Colorado State could be one franchise running back away from its glory days.

Just be sure to catch the league early in its non-conference games. In the first few weeks, league teams tackles Virginia, Arizona (twice), UCLA (twice), Colorado, Texas, Cal and Boise State, among others.

Results of those games will lift at least one team into the Top 25 and, perhaps, set a course for the league championship. Then that team can happily wear the target next year.

— Natalie Meisler

Mountain West Picks

	GOOD NEWS	BAD NEWS	OUR CALL
1. TCU	Nine starters return from the No. 2 ranked defense in the country.	QB battle not over. TCU draws some key Thursday games, which can hurt continuity.	RB Aaron Brown can carry the offense; there's enough talent on D for a Top 25 stay.
2. BYU	Veteran O-line; WR Austin Collie returns; RB Fui Vakapuna will be good.	John Beck can't be easily replaced, and a new QB will face some challenges.	BYU is back. The Cougars will wear the target this year, but can count on another bowl trip.
3. Utah	QB Brian Johnson returns from ACL surgery and has a deep receiving corps.	DB Eric Weddle did it all, and will be missed. RB position has struggled for a few years.	Utah, as usual, will steadily improve; once again, no worse than second place rides on finale vs. BYU.
4. Wyoming	QB Karsten Sween has the makings of a winner; a deep receiving corps.	Defense needs to fill some holes and O-line must rebuild in a hurry.	A win against Virginia in home opener could vault Cowboys into a confidence spree.
5. New Mexico	Sophomore Donovan Porterie could become most exciting QB at UNM in years.	Some holes to fill on O-line; must replace key player Quincy Black on defense.	Traditionally regarded as a defensive unit, Lobos have all the tools on offense to explode.
6. Colorado St.	RB Kyle Bell is back from ACL surgery; outstanding senior leadership.	This one-time MWC power has eroded; offensive line needs significant improvement.	A healthy Bell and a veteran defense tried to give Sonny Lubick one last hurrah.
7. Air Force	Shaun Carney is MWC's most experienced QB; LB Drew Fowler is league's leading tackler.	Will take a while to adjust, as triple option offense no longer defines AFA.	Troy Calhoun is the ideal leader for the job. It's just going to take awhile.
8. San Diego St.	Aztecs have two experienced QBs and, typically, talent at the skill positions.	Only four starters return on defense; QB instability has been a problem for years.	Chuck Long has had a year to get his program going and progress is expected.
9. UNLV	Rebs have standout group of receivers. LB Beau Bell will be a force.	QB Rocky Hinds looked good early, but struggled with knee problems after surgery.	UNLV often looks good on paper, but until the Rebels prove otherwise, they remain the pick for last.

Lindy's 2007 ALL-MWC Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Brian Johnson	Jr.	Utah
RB	Rodney Ferguson	Jr.	New Mexico
RB	Kyle Bell	Jr.	Colorado St.
WR	Ryan Wolfe	So.	UNLV
WR	Travis Brown	Sr.	New Mexico
TE	Wade Betschart	Sr.	Wyoming
C	Sete Aulai	Sr.	BYU
OL	Ray Feinga	Jr.	BYU
OL	Brandyn Dombrowski	Sr.	San Diego St.
OL	Jason Boone	Sr.	Utah
OL	Devin Clark	Sr.	New Mexico
AP	Aaron Brown	Jr.	TCU
PK	Louie Sakoda	Jr.	Utah

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Tommy Blake	Sr.	TCU
DL	Chase Ortiz	Sr.	TCU
DL	Martail Burnett	Sr.	Utah
DL	Jesse Nading	Sr.	Colorado St.
LB	Drew Fowler	Sr.	Air Force
LB	Jason Phillips	Jr.	TCU
LB	Ward Dobbs	Jr.	Wyoming
DB	DeAndre Wright	Jr.	New Mexico
DB	Quinn Gooch	Sr.	BYU
DB	Brian Bonner	Sr.	TCU
DB	Julius Stinson	Sr.	Wyoming.
P	Jimmie Kaylor	Sr.	Colorado St.

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Karsten Sween	So.	Wyoming
RB	Fui Vakapuna	Jr.	BYU
RB	Chad Hall	Sr.	Air Force
WR	Marcus Smith	Sr.	New Mexico
WR	Casey Flair	Jr.	UNLV
TE	Kory Sperry	Sr.	Colorado St.
C	Joe Hawley	So.	UNLV
OL	Blaine Guenther	Sr.	Air Force
OL	Travis Bright	Jr.	BYU
OL	Matty Lindner	Sr.	TCU
OL	Dallas Reynolds	Jr.	BYU
AP	Brent Casteel	Jr.	Utah
PK	Sergio Aguayo	Sr.	UNLV

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Tyler Donaldson	Sr.	New Mexico
DL	Blake Smith	Sr.	Colorado St.
DL	Nick Osborn	Sr.	San Diego St.
DL	Jeremy Geathers	Jr.	UNLV
LB	Joe Jiannoni	Sr.	Utah
LB	Beau Bell	Sr.	UNLV
LB	Russell Allen	Jr.	San Diego St.
DB	Bobby Giannini	Jr.	Air Force.
DB	Klint Kubiak	Jr.	Colorado St.
DB	Glover Quin	Jr.	New Mexico
DB	Mike Pagnotta	Jr.	Colorado St.
P	Louie Sakoda	Jr.	Utah

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	Virginia at Wyoming
Sept. 1	Arizona at BYU
Sept. 1	Colorado vs. Colorado State (Denver)
Sept. 8	TCU at Texas
Sept. 8	Cal at Colorado State
Sept. 8	BYU at UCLA
Sept. 15	UCLA at Utah
Sept. 15	Wyoming at Boise State
Sept.15	New Mexico at Arizona
Oct. 5	Utah at Louisville
Oct. 13	TCU at Stanford
Oct. 18	Utah at TCU
Nov. 8	TCU at BYU
Nov. 10	Air Force at Notre Dame
Nov. 24	Utah at BYU

Bowl Connections

Champion
Las Vegas Bowl vs. Pac-10 #5

MWC #2
Poinsettia Bowl vs. Navy or at-large

MWC #3
Armed Forces Bowl vs. Pac-10 #6

MWC #4
New Mexico Bowl vs. WAC #3

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Tommy Blake	DE	Sr.	TCU	Preseason All-American at least a second rounder.
2. Ray Feinga	OG	Jr.	BYU	He's 6-5, 322 ... and the BYU O-line factory continues.
3. Travis Brown	WR	Sr.	New Mexico	Needs weight, but at 6-3, 189, he has the hands.
4. Jesse Nading	DE	Sr.	Colorado State	Rams best defensive end since Joey Porter.
5. Beau Bell	LB	Sr.	UNLV	Needs one healthy season to continue to impress NFL.
6. Chase Ortiz	DE	Sr.	TCU	Punishes quarterback from either side.
7. Jason Phillips	LB	Jr.	TCU	Height (6-1) only question for converted fullback.
8. Fui Vakapuna	RB	Jr.	BYU	6-1, 234-pounder is ideal short-yardage back.
9. Kory Sperry	TE	Sr.	Colorado State	H-back (6-6, 260) must improve blocking.
10. Devin Moore	RB	Jr.	Wyoming.	Clocked at 4.31 but needs to overcome fumbleitis.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Brian Johnson, QB, Utah	Aaron Brown, RB, TCU	Tommy Blake, DE, TCU	Matt Asiata, RB, Utah

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Brian Johnson	Utah
Strongest Arm	Karsten Sween	Wyoming
Best Scrambler	Shaun Carney	Air Force
Coolest in the Clutch	Donovan Porterie	New Mexico
Toughest to Bring Down	Kyle Bell	Colorado State
Best Hands	Travis Brown	New Mexico
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Ryan Wolfe	UNLV
Best Pass Blocker	Devin Clark	New Mexico
Best Run Blocker	Ray Feinga	BYU
Best Pass Rusher	Tommy Blake	TCU
Best Cover Corner	DeAndre Wright	New Mexico
Special Teams Demon	Joey Rucks	Colorado State

COUGARS

AT A GLANCE

2006

11-2 overall, 8-0 MWC (1st)

COACH

Bronco Mendenhall — At BYU and overall: 17-8, 2 years

RETURNING STARTERS

12; 5 offense, 7 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Max Hall, FB Fui Vakapuna, WR Austin Collie, LB Bryan Kehl, LB Kelly Poppinga, LB David Nixon, S Quinn Gooch

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The winning tradition has returned after BYU steamrolled the Mountain West in 2006. The defense and running game could carry the Cougars while the offense rebuilds around a new quarterback.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

BYU is always one interception away from a quarterback controversy, and some patience will be required as Max Hall, perhaps rusty, gains experience. A tough opening schedule — Arizona at home, at UCLA and Tulsa — could set a negative tone for the season.

KEY LOSSES

QB John Beck, RB Curtis Brown, OT Jake Kuresa, TE Jonny Harline, LB Cameron Jensen

OVERVIEW

The Cougars wear the conference target this year, and don't look for them to go unbeaten again. But the program is back on solid footing, and a third straight bowl trip is likely, given the solid defense and deep receiving corps to help along the new quarterback.

No Time for Complacency; BYU Wants to 'Raise the Bar'

One time is not nearly enough. BYU's third-year coach Bronco Mendenhall won't let the Cougars rest on their Mountain West Conference championship laurels the way his predecessor Gary Crowton did after 2001.

This is BYU, where annual success is demanded internally and externally, and no one in Provo wants to hear excuses about losing five first-team All-MWC players to graduation. Not even when one of them is starting quarterback John Beck, a second-round NFL Draft pick.

"The issue is reloading, not rebuilding. We have very good young players waiting in the wings," said Mendenhall.

It's why Mendenhall welcomed the team back in January with the theme of "raising the bar." The Cougars take a 10-game winning streak into the 2007 season following a No. 15 finish in the polls.

"There have been many that have claimed that BYU football is back, and our program has returned," Mendenhall said.

"We're just beginning. Our current program, in relation to what it once was, will be viewed as being similar once consistency is established."

OFFENSE

For a return to BYU's glory days, there has to be a quarterback battle. That's what there was in the spring as the Cougars tried to replace Mountain West Offensive Player of the Year John Beck.

Mendenhall, wanting to make a decision in the spring, had hinted in favor of Arizona State transfer Max Hall. It was a much easier decision when junior college transfer Cade Cooper suffered a severe foot ligament injury in the spring game. Cooper will redshirt in 2007.

Mendenhall had called Hall the "more emotional ... more explosive" of the two quarterbacks, but the biggest question mark hovering over Hall is the fact he hasn't taken a live snap in three years — between Arizona State, a brief church mission and a redshirt transfer year at BYU.

The surprise of the spring game was third-teamer Brenden Gaskins, a walk-on transfer from Glendale Community College (Ariz.) who originally signed with Nevada.

He entered the scrimmage with very little work, but completed 19 of 22 passes for 174 yards and a touchdown.

Two-time all-conference running back Curtis Brown is gone with his 77.7-yard per game average. He was also Beck's favorite target with 4.6 catches per game. Fui Vakapuna moves into Brown's role, and Mendenhall expects him to do many of the same things.

After Brown, the top two receivers were senior tight end Jonny Harline and freshman wide receiver McKay Jacobson. The former will try to play on Sundays this fall. The latter is on a church mission.

Returning from a mission, however, is receiver Austin Collie, the 2004 MWC Freshman of the Year. His catching abilities never left. He needs to get his legs back this summer after two years away from conditioning.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COUTO/ICON SMI

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 141.9 ypg rushing (3rd in MWC/53rd NCAA), 323.5 passing (1st/4th), 465.5 total offense (1st/4th), 36.8 ppg (1st/5th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Max Hall	So.	What to expect? Hasn't played in three years.	Brenden Gaskins, So.
RB	Fui Vakapuna	Jr.	A versatile, yet powerful player.	Manase Tonga, Jr.
WR	Michael Reed*	Jr.	Veteran wide receiver had 25 catches, 339 yards in 2006.	Bryce Mahuika, Jr.
WR	Bryce Mahuika	Jr.	Three of five catches last year came vs. Utah.	Reed White, Jr.
WR	Austin Collie	So.	A 2004 Freshman All-American; coming off mission.	Matt Allen, Sr.
TE	Andrew George	So.	There is ample depth at this position.	Vic So'oto, So.
LT	Dallas Reynolds*	Jr.	Father, Lance, is the associate head coach.	R.J. Willing, So.
LG	Ray Feinga*	Jr.	Inside force at 6-5, 322; an honors candidate.	Walter Kahaiali'i, Fr.
C	Sete Aulai*	Sr.	One of the top centers in Mountain West.	R.J. Willing, So.
RG	Travis Bright*	Jr.	Was a standout in his first year of action.	Rick Wolfley, Fr.
RT	David Oswald	Jr.	Key newcomer to starting lineup.	Jason Speredon, Fr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 114.1 ypg rushing (4th in MWC/31st NCAA), 205.1 passing (5th/65th), 319.2 total defense (3rd/38th), 14.7 ppg (2nd/10th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Ian Dulan	So.	Was a starter before breaking his leg.	Brett Denney, So.
NT	Russell Tialavea*	So.	Key contributor becomes full-time starter.	Mosese Foketi, Jr.
DE	Jan Jorgensen*	So.	Freshman All-American had five sacks.	Kyle Luekenga, Jr.
LB	Bryan Kehl*	Sr.	Top returning tackler for Cougars (70).	Grant Nelson, So.
LB	Kelly Poppinga	Sr.	Moves from outside to fill key void.	Terrance Hooks, So.
LB	Shawn Doman	So.	His cousin is BYU QBs coach, Brandon Doman.	Markell Staffieri, Sr.
LB	David Nixon*	Jr.	Led Cougars with 10.5 tackles for losses.	Chris Bolden, Sr.
CB	Ben Criddle*	Sr.	Was a major surprise in 2006.	Andre Saulsberry, Sr.
CB	Kayle Buchanan	Sr.	Steps into bigger role this season.	Brandon Howard, So.
SS	Dustin Gabriel*	Sr.	Returned interception for touchdown.	Corby Hodgkiss, Sr.
FS	Quinn Gooch*	Sr.	Earned second-team All-MWC honors last year.	David Tafuna, Sr.

*Returning starter

BYU has extensive depth to take over for Harline. Although the Cougars will miss Jake Kuresa and offensive line coach Jeff Grimes (who left for Colorado), four of last year's starters return for what should be a vintage offensive line.

DEFENSE

BYU's most-improved area in 2006 was defense, which cut its points allowed in half. Much of the success was traced to a 3-4 instead of the 3-3-5 Mendenhall originally brought with him from New Mexico for his initial stint as BYU's defensive coordinator.

The hub of that defense — first-team All-MWC linebacker Cameron Jensen — has moved on.

Seniors Bryan Kehl and Kelly Poppinga take over the linebacker leadership. It's a veteran defense, with seven returning starters, although the three-man front includes all sophomores. Defensive end Jan Jorgensen is coming off Freshman All-American honors.

"Linebacker is still our strength," Mendenhall said. "It is still the most athletic position and still the deepest position on the defense."

Poppinga, whose older brother Brady is a former Cougar now with the Green Bay Packers, moves inside for 2007. David Nixon, who broke up five passes and caused two fumbles last season, returns on the outside.

Quinn Gooch and Dustin Gabriel return at the safety positions. Mendenhall calls cornerback the biggest question on defense, although there is ample experience.

"The defense has a great chance to be the more experienced part of the team this year," Mendenhall said. "With only one year in the system, we expect to take a substantial jump again in Year Two."

SPECIAL TEAMS

BYU will once again turn to one man to handle both kicking and punting, and that man is redshirt freshman Mitch Payne. Payne is the younger brother of former BYU kicker Matt Payne.

The Cougars ranked second in the Mountain West in punt returns with Nathan Meikle handling the job, but an ample replacement is needed to keep BYU near the top of the conference leaders.

— Natalie Meisler

COLORADO STATE

RAMS

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AT A GLANCE

2006

4-8 overall, 1-7 MWC (T-8th)

COACH

Sonny Lubick — At CSU: 105-65, 14 years; overall: 126-84, 18 years

RETURNING STARTERS

19; 8 offense, 9 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

RB Kyle Bell, H-Back Kory Sperry, WR Johnny Walker, WR Damon Morton, DE Jesse Nading, DT Blake Smith, S Klint Kubiak

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

A senior-dominated lineup looks to revive the Rams' winning tradition. The defense is experienced, and the line could be dominating. The running game looks for a recovery behind the return of Kyle Bell.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The Rams ended 2006 with a seven-game freefall and must exert a rushing presence to even think about winning a game. The placekicking needs to improve. The opening schedule is difficult: Colorado in Denver, Cal, at Houston, at TCU.

KEY LOSSES

WR Dustin Osborn, LB Luke Adkins, OT Clint Oldenburg, OT Josh Day

OVERVIEW

Colorado State has eroded over the past three seasons while TCU, Utah and BYU have become premier programs in the Mountain West. A strong senior class might represent the best hope for one last hurrah for Sonny Lubick, but the Rams still appear to be a tick below the league leaders.

Veteran Team Tries to Reclaim Rams' Past

When Fisher DeBerry stepped down after 23 seasons at the Air Force Academy, Sonny Lubick assumed the mantle as dean of Mountain West coaches.

Lubick turned 70 in March. The field at Hughes Stadium already bears his name. He has six league championship rings stretching back to the Western Athletic Conference days in the 1990s.

Colorado State was the pre-eminent program in the MWC's early years, taking three of the first four titles through 2002.

Since then, the rise of Utah, initiated by Lubick protégé Urban Meyer, the addition of TCU to the Mountain West and BYU's resurgence contributed to sinking the Rams to a 13-18 league mark since 2002.

Last season, Colorado State plunged into a seven-game tailspin after a 4-1 start that was buoyed by wins over Colorado and Fresno State — two teams, it turned out, that were en route to their worst seasons in decades.

So there is still plenty left for Lubick to prove as he enters his 15th season with the Rams.

"Coming off a year like last year, reality sets in," Lubick said. "We weren't tough enough in three games (we could have won)."

CSU originally set the bar for the league. Now it's time for the Rams to re-raise it for themselves.

"You sure believe you can do it," Lubick said.

OFFENSE

The return of running back Kyle Bell adds to any optimism that Colorado State can get things turned around.

He tore his ACL in fall camp last August, dooming the rushing attack. He was limited to non-contact work in the spring, when the running game was emphasized with a cast of back-ups.

Bell, who had a "clean" ACL tear with no other ligament or cartilage damage, is expected to be ready for the season.

That's good news because if you toss out the rushing yardage in last season's opener against I-AA Weber State, the Rams managed only 769 yards on the ground in the next 11 games. As it was, they ranked 113th nationally in rushing.

Quarterback Caleb Hanie frequently moved the chains between the 20s with 2,482 total yards, but the Rams were held without a touchdown three times in league play.

Hanie, a senior, lost only one member of a five-man rotation of wideouts, which includes brothers Damon Morton and Dion Morton. For a big target, Hanie has senior Kory Sperry, who has an NFL-sized 6-6, 260-pound frame. Sperry is looking to bounce back from an inconsistent year.

But it might not matter if Hanie had five Calvin Johnsons. Colorado State's offense has traditionally been most successful with a bruising running back in Bell's mold. But even Bell might have been hard pressed to exceed 1,000 yards last season, given an inexperienced and often-injured offensive line.

PHOTO BY AARON M. SPRECHER/KCON SNB

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 76.5 ypg rushing (9th in MWC/113th NCAA), 218.1 passing (4th/42nd), 294.6 total offense (8th/100th), 16.8 ppg (8th/104th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Caleb Hanie*	Sr.	Was fourth in MWC total offense (206.8 yards per game).	Billy Farris, Jr.
RB	Kyle Bell	Sr.	Rushed for 1,288 yards in '05; is coming off ACL surgery.	Michael Myers, Jr.
WR	Luke Roberts*	Sr.	A proven target with size (6-2, 206).	George Hill, Sr.
WR	Damon Morton*	Sr.	With 15.0 ypc, a bigger big-play threat than Roberts.	Johnny Walker, Sr.
HB	Kory Sperry*	Sr.	Needs big year for NFL scouts.	Kevin McPeek, Jr.
TE	Chris Kawulok*	Jr.	No receptions last year because of shoulder injury.	Adam Seymore, Fr.
LT	Cole Pemberton	So.	Key spot for a first-time starter.	Marvin Arnold, Sr.
LG	Scott Benedict*	So.	Former walk-on started six games last season.	Shelley Smith, So.
C	Nick Allotta*	Sr.	Has made 19 starts at either center or guard.	Tim Walter, So.
RG	Guy Miller	Fr.	Made an impact in spring; must win job in fall.	Adrian Martinez, So.*
RT	Brian Lepak	Fr.	This 4.0 GPA student won starting job in spring.	Dane Stratton, Jr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 149.1 ypg rushing (7th in MWC/80th NCAA), 181.2 passing (4th/28th), 330.3 total defense (5th/53rd), 21.9 ppg (5th/52nd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Jesse Nading*	Sr.	Third-year starter can be dominating.	Tommie Hill, Jr.
NT	Blake Smith*	Sr.	Leads defense with 31 career starts.	Matt Rupp, Jr.
DT	Erik Sandie*	Sr.	Rams need his spirited interior force.	James Morehead, So.
DE	Bob Vomhof	Sr.	These two players are pretty much interchangeable.	Wade Landers, Jr.*
LB	John Clark	Jr.	Junior college transfer will share time.	Jake Pottorff, So.
LB	Jeff Horinek*	Jr.	The anchor of the linebacking corps.	Nathan Pauly, Sr.
LB	Ricky Brewer	Fr.	Emerged as a starter in spring camp.	Sedric Patterson, So.
CB	Darryl Williams*	Sr.	Led CSU with three interceptions last season.	DeAngelo Wilkinson, Fr.
CB	Joey Rucks*	Sr.	A hard hitter and special teams standout.	Jermaine Walters, Sr.
SS	Mike Pagnotta*	Jr.	Made honorable mention all-league despite injuries.	Mike Pagnotta, Jr.
FS	Klint Kubiak*	Jr.	Son of Houston Texans coach had 90 tackles in '06.	Jake Galusha, Jr.

*Returning starter

This season, there is only one member of the line with more than a year's experience — senior center Nick Allotta.

DEFENSE

With nine returning starters on defense, and six projected senior starters, the Rams look to improve on last year's outfit that knocked nearly 100 yards per game off the total yardage yielded the previous season.

The defensive line, led by three-year starting end Jesse Nading, could be as strong as any in the league. Seniors Blake Smith and Erik Sandie rotate inside with junior Matt Rupp, Junior Wade Landers and senior Bob Vomhof share the other end position.

There was solid competition for the only two open jobs — both at linebacker. Junior college transfer John Clark was competing with part-time returning starter Jake Pottorff on one side, and redshirt freshman Ricky Brewer was challenging special teams standout Sedric Patterson on the other.

The secondary returns two deep. Redshirt freshman DeAngelo Wilkinson is vying for playing time at cornerback, and redshirt freshman Michael Johnson is trying to break into the safety rotation.

While this will be the most physical defense in Fort Collins in years, Colorado State has struggled the last few seasons at forcing turnovers. The Rams had only seven interceptions and five fumble recoveries last season, which contributed to the team's minus-7 turnover ratio for the season.

SPECIAL TEAMS

This area was a traditional Colorado State strength until a few years ago.

The one constant has been punter Jimmie Kaylor, who averaged 43.7 yards last season, but had two blocked. He is a legitimate candidate for the Ray Guy Award.

The kicking game was spotty with Jason Smith going through a slump, leaving him eight of 15 for the season. Yet, Lubick resisted signing a kicker in the offseason.

Given the depth and talent in the receiving and secondary units, there's no lack of candidates for return duties. Senior wide receiver Damon Morton likely will be the primary punt and kickoff returner again.

— Natalie Meisler

TCU HORNED FROGS

TCU HORNED FROGS TCU HORNED FROGS TCU HORNED FROGS TCU HORNED

AT A GLANCE

2006

11-2 overall, 6-2 MWC (2nd)

COACH

Gary Patterson: At TCU and overall: 54-20, 6 years

RETURNING STARTERS

15; 5 offense, 9 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

TB Aaron Brown, LB Jason Phillips, DE Chase Ortiz, DE Tommy Blake, S Brian Bonner, WR Donald Massey, K Chris Manfredini

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

TCU is well-coached, talented and will be playing a mean brand of defense — again. It will be one of the nation's best. TB Aaron Brown can keep the offense rolling through a quarterback change.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Of course, a quarterback change is often a bit dicey, and nothing was resolved in the spring. The schedule begins at home against Baylor, then comes a trip to Texas and then a trip to Air Force, and its new offense, just five days later. It could all be tricky.

KEY LOSSES

QB Jeff Ballard, TB Lonta Hobbs, S Marvin White, WR Quentilly Harmon, WR Michael DePriest

OVERVIEW

The Horned Frogs are the favorite to win the Mountain West and could get elevated to the national discussion because of an early game at Texas. Even just a good showing might be important to how the pollsters see the Frogs.

Encore Performance Could Be Something Special

Except for two conference hiccups — against Mountain West Conference champion BYU and Utah in consecutive weeks — TCU was unstoppable in 2006.

The Frogs' average margin of victory was nearly 17 points, and they scored 30 points or more six times, including in each of their final four contests.

The Horned Frogs lost star quarterback Jeff Ballard and he must be replaced along with two offensive linemen. But there is no shortage of candidates.

Defensively, the Frogs again should be one of the toughest units in the nation with nine starters returning. Star ends Tommy Blake and Chase Ortiz head up the list of returnees.

Head coach Gary Patterson upgraded TCU's non-league slate with an early trip to Texas and, to a much-lesser extent, a midseason venture to Stanford.

The Frogs will be trying to reach 11 wins for the fourth time in five seasons; that might be the least of their goals. TCU looks like it will knock on the BCS door again this year. With Patterson on board and a recent upgrade in facilities, the Frogs will get there someday.

OFFENSE

The Jeff Ballard era at quarterback is over and last year's backup, Marcus Jackson, isn't ready to step into his shoes just yet.

Jackson presumably was going to move up the depth chart and win the job in the spring, giving at least a little bit of continuity to the position. Last year, Jackson rallied the Horned Frogs to a 17-7 season-opening win over Baylor after Ballard was injured.

He went 11 of 14 with 148 yards and two scores in that game, earning MWC Player of the Week honors.

But he couldn't separate from redshirt freshman Andy Dalton in the spring, and Patterson is keeping the competition open for fall camp.

When the season starts, the Horned Frogs can lean on Aaron Brown, who rushed for 801 yards last season and caught 34 passes for 455 yards. Not many outside of Fort Worth or the Mountain West Conference might know him, but he's one of the most versatile and talented runners in the nation.

Three starters return on the line, including second-team all-conference guard Matty Lindner. Center Blake Schlueter is another holdover. He earned honorable mention all-conference honors as a sophomore in his first season as a starter.

A new face in the starting lineup is Marshall Newhouse at right tackle, the only true freshman to play for TCU on offense last season.

Once again, the receiving corps will be solid. Donald Massey, last year's No. 3 receiver, made 26 receptions. Shea Reagan steps in at tight end after making 14 catches, all for first downs.

DEFENSE

Tommy Blake and Chase Ortiz make up one of the top defensive end

PHOTO BY JAMES D. SMITH/ICON SMI

Scouting Report: Offense

2006: 194.6 rushing ypg (2nd MWC/9th NCAA), 213.8 passing ypg (5th/48th), 408.5 ypg total offense (2nd/17th), 29.2 ppg (2nd/T-26th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Marcus Jackson	So.	Someone has two big shoes to fill in replacing Ballard.	Andy Dalton, Fr.
TB	Aaron Brown*	Jr.	Should become more nationally known this season.	Joseph Turner, So.
FB	William Jackson	Sr.	Will help clear big holes for Brown.	Chris Smith, So.
WR	Donald Massey*	Jr.	Tied school record with three TDs vs. San Diego State.	Marcus Brock, Sr.
WR	Walter Bryant	Jr.	Big target had 10 catches in 2006 for Frogs.	Derek Moore, Sr.
TE	Shea Reagan	Jr.	All 14 catches last year were for first downs.	Quinton Cunigan, Sr.
LT	Wade Sisk*	Sr.	Started 13 games at right tackle last year.	Nic Richmond, So.
LG	Matty Lindner*	Sr.	Allowed just one sack in 2006.	Preston Phillips, Jr.
C	Blake Schlueter*	Jr.	Really came on in second half of last season.	Tony Savino, Sr.
RG	Heath Raetz	Jr.	Returns after missing all of 2006 due to injury.	Giles Montgomery, Jr.
RT	Marshall Newhouse	So.	Only true freshman on offense for Frogs in '06.	Marcus Cannon, Fr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006: 60.9 rushing ypg (1st MWC/2nd NCAA), 174.1 passing ypg (5th/21st), 234.9 ypg total defense (1st/2nd), 12.3 ppg (1st/3rd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Chase Ortiz*	Sr.	Led MWC in sacks a year ago.	Matt Panfil, Jr.
DT	James Vess*	Jr.	Fort Worth native started last eight games of '06.	Wayne Daniels, So.
NT	Cody Moore	Jr.	Had 5.5 TFLs, three sacks, recovered two fumbles.	Cory Grant, Fr.
DE	Tommy Blake*	Sr.	All-American tries to become first-round pick.	Allen Christopher, So.
LB	David Hawthorne*	Sr.	Of 43 tackles in 2006, six were for loss.	Robert Henson, Jr.
LB	Jason Phillips*	Jr.	TCU's top returning tackler with 73.	Daryl Washington, So.
CB	Nick Sanders*	So.	Had three INTs last year, one for a touchdown.	Alex Ibiloye, Fr.
CB	Torrey Stewart	Sr.	Junior college transfer finished 2006 on a high note.	Rafael Priest, So.*
WS	David Roach*	Sr.	Former QB had 4.5 sacks for Frogs in 2006.	Brian Bonner, Sr.
SS	Brian Bonner*	Sr.	Was second-team All-MWC at strong safety.	Stephen Hodge, Jr.
FS	Steven Coleman	Jr.	Had 10 tackles and a forced fumble in two starts.	David Roach, Sr.

*Returning starter

combinations in the country.

Blake earned first-team All-MWC honors for the second straight season and capped off the year by earning Defensive MVP honors in the Poinsettia Bowl, when he was matched against eventual fourth-round pick Doug Free of Northern Illinois. Blake had two sacks and another tackle for loss in that matchup.

Ortiz joined Blake on the All-MWC team for the second straight season after leading the league in sacks (seven) and tackles for a loss (16.5). James Vess returns at tackle after starting the final eight games of 2006. He finished with 8.5 tackles for a loss.

More good news is that the entire linebacking corps returns. Jason Phillips, a junior, has started all 25 games in his career and is the Frogs' top returning tackler with 73 stops.

Joining him is David Hawthorne, who started all 13 games in 2006 and registered 43 tackles. Super backup Robert Henson, who had 64 tackles despite not starting a game last year, also returns.

Cornerback Nick Sanders picked off three passes a year ago. The other starting corner last season, Rafael Priest, was listed as a backup in the spring behind Torrey Stewart, a junior college transfer who really came on at the end of last year.

TCU returns two starters in its three-safety system, including Brian Bonner, who had 9.5 tackles for loss, including 4.5 sacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Special teams should be another strength. Chris Manfredini has been nearly automatic on shorter kicks — 12 of 14 on field goal attempts last year and 35 of 38 as a collegian — and now has the job all to himself.

The return game should be another weapon in the TCU arsenal.

Brian Bonner led the MWC by averaging 12.7 yards per punt return, and he earned first-team all-league honors as a return specialist. The Frogs are likewise set on kickoff returns with Donald Massey and others as big-play threats.

— Steve Hunt

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AT A GLANCE

2006

8-5 overall, 5-3 MWC (T-3rd)

COACH

Kyle Whittingham — At Utah and overall: 15-10, 2 years

RETURNING STARTERS

16; 9 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Brian Johnson, WR Brent Casteel, DE Martail Burnett, LB Joe Jiannoni, DB Steve Tate, P/PK Louie Sakoda

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

The offense should perk up with the return of QB Brian Johnson, who redshirted in 2006 while rehabbing an ACL injury. The receiving corps is solid, although questions remain at running back.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The Utes lost the heart and soul of the defense in four-year starter Eric Weddle, who also provided most of the big plays on offense. The non-conference schedule has a trio of tough games — at Oregon State, vs. UCLA, and at Louisville.

KEY LOSSES

CB/RB Eric Weddle, OL Tavo Tupola, DL Kelly Talavou

OVERVIEW

With BYU and TCU both breaking in new quarterbacks, Utah has an edge on the other conference heavyweights if Brian Johnson can produce as he did in 2005. The offense struggled without him, but this year's rebuilding task appears on the defensive side of the ball. That unit will have to step up for Utah to approximate anything like the 2004 season.

Johnson Returns as Utes Plan for Another MWC Run

While most coaches, including Utah's Kyle Whittingham, point to the last two Mountain West Champs — BYU and TCU — as the teams to beat, no one can ever rule out Utah.

The Utes still have a few carryovers from the 2004 team that went unbeaten and routed Pittsburgh in the Fiesta Bowl, although most of those players were simply observers.

One of those was quarterback Brian Johnson, who backed up Heisman finalist Alex Smith before setting his own path to stardom in 2005. But then he suffered a torn ACL late in the season, and that affected what Utah did in 2006.

Whittingham promised to have a good quarterback a year ago. He just didn't know which one of three would line up behind center. But when Johnson took an extra year to rehab the knee, the Utes struggled on offense.

If not for the league's best defensive player, Eric Weddle, often dropping in to help the red-zone offense, the Utes would have been hard pressed to get to — and win — a fourth straight bowl game.

The Utes are back, offensively at least, thanks to Johnson's return to good health. Which means you can't rule out Utah.

With a schedule featuring Oregon State and UCLA wrapping around an inordinately early Sept. 8 Mountain West opener with Air Force, Utah has an opportunity to make some early noise on the national scene.

Still, there are some holes to fill on both sides of the ball, and no one expects Utah to come up with another guy like Weddle any time soon.

OFFENSE

The offense struggled without Brian Johnson last year, as he took a redshirt season to continue rehab for a torn ACL, suffered late in the 2005 season. That's when he was an 18-year-old true sophomore, averaging 337 yards of total offense, ranked fourth in the country.

Although his receivers were mostly new back then, Brent Casteel, Derrek Richards and Brian Hernandez are now accomplished veterans.

If there was some rust on Johnson to start spring ball, there was none at the end.

"He's back to 100 percent," coach Kyle Whittingham said. "He has no limits."

As for the mobility needed to run the spread offense, Whittingham calls him "faster than ever."

Last year's back-up, Oklahoma transfer Tommy Grady, returns as a senior and finally looked comfortable in the offense this spring after struggling in his few appearances last season. He's a big gunner at 6-7, 235.

The coaches don't want Johnson to carry the entire offense, so the Utes need more from the running game. Historically, Utah has been most effective with a running back tandem, but last year the Utes couldn't find one consistent back, let alone two.

USC transfer Darryl Poston is working on a rare seventh year of eligibility because of an injury-marred career.

PHOTO BY CHARLES BAUS/ICON SMI

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 140.5 ypg rushing (4th in MWC/54nd NCAA), 227.9 passing (2nd/34th), 368.4 total offense (3rd/41st), 27.9 ppg (3rd/33rd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Brian Johnson	Jr.	Ready to pick up where he left off in '05.	Tommy Grady, Sr.
RB	Matt Asiata	Jr.	Utes are really counting on junior college All-American.	D. Mack, Jr./D. Poston, Sr.*
WR	Derrek Richards*	Sr.	Led Utes receivers in yards, catches last year.	Freddie Brown, Jr.
WR	Brent Casteel*	Jr.	He's a receiving, running, returning threat.	Freddie Brown, Jr.
WR	Brian Hernandez*	Sr.	Second in team catches last year with 46.	Bradon Godfrey, Jr.
TE	Matt Sims*	Sr.	Used primarily as a blocker.	Colt Sampson, Jr.
LT	Jason Boone*	Sr.	All-league candidate moves from right tackle.	Jeremy Inferrera, Sr.
LG	Zane Beadles*	So.	Held up well as a freshman starter.	Caleb Schlauderaff, Fr.
C	Kyle Gunther*	Sr.	A second-year starter.	Tyler Williams, So.
RG	Robert Conley*	Jr.	Third-year starter could push for MWC honors.	Zane Taylor, Fr.
RT	Dustin Hensel	Jr.	Emergence allowed Boone to move to left tackle.	Jeremy Inferrera, Sr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 106.5 ypg rushing (2nd in MWC/22nd NCAA), 215.7 passing (7th/80th), 322.1 total defense (4th/43rd), 19.8 ppg (3rd/37th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Martail Burnett*	Sr.	Pass rusher should contend for All-MWC.	Alex Puccinelli, Sr.
DT	Kenape Eliapo	So.	Was a valuable backup as a freshman.	Zeke Tuinei-Wily, So.
NT	Gabe Long	Sr.	Well-traveled; finally get his chance to start.	Casey Sutera, Sr.
DE	Greg Newman	Jr.	Saw significant backup work in 2006.	Koa Misi, So.
LB	Joe Jiannoni*	Sr.	Second team All-MWC last season.	Mike Wright, So.
LB	Malakai Mokofisi	Sr.	Has extensive experience.	Matt Martinez, Fr.
LB	Kyle Brady*	Sr.	Moves from strongside to "rover" position.	Stevenson Sylvester, So.
CB	Sean Smith	So.	Converted receiver is a superb athlete.	Justin Jones, So.
CB	Brice McCain*	Jr.	Utes' fastest player at 4.32 seconds in 40.	Mookie Murphy, Fr.
SS	Joe Dale	So.	Earned notice last year as special teams player.	Deshawn Richard, Jr.
FS	Steve Tate*	Sr.	Was second in MWC with 102 tackles.	R.J. Rice, Jr.

*Returning starter

The injury streak continued with a broken foot in the spring. Mike Liti (knee) gave up football in late April.

Utah's hopes rest with junior college transfer Matt Asiata, a 6-0, 235-pound junior college All-American who averaged 6.3 yards a carry. He'll compete in fall camp with Poston, Darrell Mack and Ray Stowers.

Four starters return to the line, which seems to dominate on an annual basis.

DEFENSE

The hub of the defense — All-American cornerback Eric Weddle — is gone. Two all-conference 300-pound defensive tackles followed him.

The top returning player is senior end Martail Burnett, who led the Utes in sacks with 5.5.

The linebacking corps has the most returning experience, led by second-team All-MWC senior Joe Jiannoni in the middle.

The best young talent in the secondary is sophomore Sean Smith, who moved from receiver to corner last season. With a spring to learn his new position, Smith made good on his promise to produce an interception in the spring game.

Safety Steve Tate took advantage of teams trying to run plays away from Weddle. He was second in the MWC with 102 tackles.

There's speed on the corner with junior Brice McCain, although he is only 5-9. He broke up five passes and has outstanding cover skills.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Utah's biggest surprise last season was Louie Sakoda seizing both placekicking and punting jobs. He did both so well that he shared the league's special teams MVP award.

He finished the year strong with four field goals in the Armed Forces Bowl win over Tulsa. He helped the Utes lead the nation in net punting with a 41.6-yard average. Besides averaging 44.0 yards, he placed 30 of 59 punts inside the 20.

Ben Vroman returns to handle the kickoffs.

The return game solidified when cornerback Brice McCain took over kickoff duties midway through last season.

— Natalie Meisler

LOBOS

AT A GLANCE

2006

6-7 overall, 4-4 MWC (5th)

COACH

Rocky Long — At New Mexico and overall: 52-57, 9 years

RETURNING STARTERS

19; 8 offense, 10 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Donovan Porterie, WR Travis Brown, WR Marcus Smith, LB Cody Kase, CB DeAndre Wright, CB Glover Quin

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

If the Lobos avoid their usual injury woes and the offensive line comes together, they could have their most explosive and balanced offense ever under Long. The experienced defense ranks among UNM's best in a few years.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The offense must adjust to a new scheme and the offensive line needs some work. The kicking game is questionable. The Lobos are on the road for two of their first three games — at UTEP and Arizona.

KEY LOSSES

QB Kole McKamey, OL Robert Turner, LB Quincy Black, PK Kenny Byrd

OVERVIEW

The Lobos finished on a downer last season, losing a home bowl game to San Jose State. They have the talent and experience to do better this season and crack the top three in the league, although November games at TCU and Utah likely will tell the tale.

Revolving Coordinators Might Finally Work for Lobos

OFFENSE

Another year, another offense for New Mexico.

Rocky Long, whose nine years at New Mexico mark the second-longest tenure in the conference, has his third offensive coordinator in as many years. Dave Baldwin, a former head coach at San Jose State and Cal State-Northridge, comes to the Lobos after four years at Michigan State.

Baldwin will install a multiple attack, replacing Bob Toledo's West Coast offense, which replaced the "just give the ball to record-setting running back DonTrell Moore" offense.

Baldwin has plenty to work with at the skill positions.

Sophomore Donovan Porterie owns the quarterback job after he was forced into the starting role midway through his redshirt freshman year. Porterie was the third starter last season, which threatened to go down in flames when senior Kole McKamey was lost to injury early in the year.

"Last year's problems at quarterback were a blessing for this year," said Long.

All Porterie did was produce game-winning drives in the final five minutes against Utah and Colorado State. In just eight games (five as a starter), he threw for nearly 1,000 yards.

An even bigger surprise than Porterie was MWC rushing leader Rodney Ferguson, who picked up where Moore left off. Ferguson dismissed any thoughts of a committee approach and ran for 1,234 yards.

New Mexico has two of the best receivers in the league in Marcus Smith and Travis Brown, both all-conference caliber three-year lettermen.

There is some work to do on the line with two starters gone. If the Lobos avoid injuries and the line comes together, New Mexico could have its most explosive and balanced offense ever under Long.

DEFENSE

New Mexico developed into a MWC contender in recent years on the strength of its blitzing defense. New Mexico struggled in this area last season while undergoing major rebuilding.

This season, with 10 returning starters, New Mexico should return to the high standards of its previous blitzing units.

The lone loss on defense was a big one in safety-middle linebacker Quincy Black, who led the Lobos with 114 tackles. He played the hybrid position originally defined by Brian Urlacher.

Senior outside linebacker Cody Kase moves inside this season to assume that role.

The strength of the secondary will be returning starters Glover Quin and DeAndre Wright at cornerback. With depth and experience throughout the defense, Long has flexibility and plans to keep everyone fresh with a deep rotation.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Next to Quincy Black, the most lamented graduation loss was kicker Kenny Byrd, a consistent performer on field goals and a standout on kickoffs.

Punter Jordan Scott returns with his 40.2-yard average. Ian Clark and Wright are back to return kicks again.

— Natalie Meisler

COWBOYS

AT A GLANCE

2006

6-6 overall, 5-3 MWC (T-3rd)

COACH

Joe Glenn — At Wyoming: 21-26, 4 years; overall: 179-85-1, 22 years

RETURNING STARTERS

13; 7 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH

QB Karsten Sween, WR Michael Ford, TE Wade Betschart, LB Ward Dobbs, CB Julius Stinson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Wyoming will have offensive balance from a veteran receiving squad, a rapidly developing quarterback and depth at running back. There is good depth at linebacker.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

The Cowboys are undergoing extensive rebuilding on both lines with almost no experience on the defensive side. The projected starting placekicker decided to transfer after spring practice. The non-conference schedule includes Virginia and a game at Boise State.

KEY LOSSES

FS John Wendling, DE Corey Mace, LT Chase Johnson, C Jason Karcher

OVERVIEW

Overall, Wyoming has a favorable schedule, opening with two home games — including that potential attention-grabbing game against Virginia — and drawing MWC favorites BYU and TCU at home. The Cowboys figure to make a slight improvement on the record and be bowl eligible.

Skill Positions Look Fine ... What About Both Lines?

OFFENSE

Joe Glenn's perennial optimism heading into his fifth campaign is backed up on paper.

Most of his outstanding receiving corps, an 1,184-yard rushing tandem and a sophomore quarterback who became a poised redshirt freshman starter just in time for Mountain West play are all headliners this season.

Quarterback Karsten Sween was elevated to starting status in the sixth game last year. He led Wyoming to five wins in the last seven contests, making the Cowboys bowl eligible, but the last bowl nod went to fourth-place New Mexico instead.

This spring, Sween showed the value of that experience, even if he was under wraps with minor knee surgery.

"He is the real deal," Glenn said. "The difference is he has been razor sharp. He hits the bulls-eye and gets a tight spiral."

Providing insurance at the position is redshirt junior Ian Hetrick, who had a breakout spring game, and senior Jacob Doss.

Sween has a familiar receiving corps, led by sure-handed Michael Ford, second in MWC receptions. Speed comes from Hoost Marsh and sophomore Greg Bolling. Starting tight end Wade Betschart also returns.

At running back, juniors Wynel Seldon and Devin Moore have game-breaking speed, though Moore needs to carry the ball more securely. The loss of three standout offensive linemen could impact production, but Glenn was encouraged by the competition in the spring.

DEFENSE

A restructuring of the defense last season, geared around a strong linebacking corps, paid big dividends. Never was the defense prouder than when it shut out bitter rival Colorado State for the first time since 1959.

The defense's strength this season is at linebacker, where all four starters return. Second-team All-MWC performer Ward Dobbs is ready to make a run at first-team honors. Senior Luke Chase is back to continue dominating the inside with Dobbs.

Glenn calls his returning corners, Julius Stinson and Michael Medina, two of the best in the league. Big-play safety John Wendling will be missed, but new starting safeties Michael Ray and Quincy Rogers saw extensive playing time in 2006.

The three-man front is gone and three sophomores project as starters.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Cowboys took a hit in this department when sophomore kicker Aric Goodman, who made 10 of 16 field goal attempts last year, including a 52-yarder, decided to transfer. Jake Scott, a sophomore, who handled some of the kicking duties last season, returns.

Punter Billy Vinnedge has a big leg, as evidenced by his 43.2 yard average and a 50-yard average on seven punts in the spring game. The return game has speed and depth in receiver Hoost Marsh and running back Devin Moore.

— Natalie Meisler

Shifting Power Leaves West in Command

When the revamped Conference USA welcomed six new teams in 2005, it was easy to assume the East would hold an edge for the near future.

After all, there was perennial power Southern Miss, two returning bowl teams in Memphis and UAB, and a program with a winning tradition in Marshall. Even East Carolina had gone to bowls from 1999 to 2001.

The four new teams in the West — Tulsa, UTEP, SMU and Rice — hadn't exactly dominated the WAC. Returning C-USA members Houston and Tulane were coming off losing seasons.

The divisions have experienced a power shift in just two seasons.

Tulsa won the C-USA title in 2005, and Houston won it last year. Of the conference's 11 bowl trips over the past two seasons, six have gone to four West teams ... and SMU was one win away from a bowl last year.

"Everything goes in cycles, but you had (quarterback) Darrell Hackney leave UAB and (tailback) DeAngelo Williams leave Memphis in the same year (2004)," SMU coach Phil Bennett said. "That may have a lot to do with it, but I still think there's a lot of parity."

In fact, 48 conference games were decided by 10 points or less last year. Rice won five C-USA games by a total of 15 points on its way to its first bowl since 1961.

"In Division I-A in general, you can take out the top 10-12 teams, and from 13 to 100, I'm not sure there's 10 points difference in any of them," Houston coach Art Briles said. "A lot of it is about who gets hot at the right time."

Could it be the way the West plays? Houston, Tulsa, SMU, Rice and UTEP all like to spread the field as often as possible. C-USA's Western winning trend appears as if it will continue this season.

Southern Miss looks like the only established title contender in the East, while the West boasts Houston, Tulsa and up-and-coming SMU.

"I've got to go with us," Briles said.

"After that, there are five or six schools that are all capable of making a run and winning their divisions. A lot of it will have to do with who plays who at the right time and who gets the breaks."

— Richard Scott

Conference USA Picks

		Good news	Bad news	Our call
EAST	1. Southern Miss	Eight starters return from rugged defense; league's best tandem of tailbacks.	QB Jeremy Young and WRs still have a lot to prove, PK Darren McCaleb hard to replace.	The Golden Eagles appear to be the only established title contender in a down division.
EAST	2. East Carolina	Took a big step last year; eight starters return from an improving defense.	Offense must answer questions at quarterback, running back and on the line.	Unless the O-line and running game step up, it will be difficult to equal last season's success.
EAST	3. UCF	Knights return 18 starters, including four DBs and an effective running game.	Passing game is loaded with uncertainty; road schedule presents a steep challenge.	New on-campus stadium might energize the program, but Knights must learn to win close games.
EAST	4. Marshall	The Herd is rebuilding depth and experience throughout team; 14 starters return.	Can QB Bernie Morris consistently get the ball to his WRs? Lack of proven runner won't help.	Herd appears to be on the verge of tangible progress but remains a year away.
EAST	5. Memphis	Passing game could be one of C-USA's best; defense should be more settled.	If the JC linemen don't come through, Tigers could be in trouble. Also holes at DB and LB.	Things won't likely be as bad as they were last year, but much improvement is needed.
EAST	6. UAB	A coaching change brings a more physical and disciplined approach.	Program has really fallen the past two years, returns only eight starters from 3-9 team.	If the Blazers were bad last year with an experienced team, how much worse will they be this year?
WEST	1. Houston	Cougars have championship confidence and eight returning defensive starters.	New starting QB; OT SirVincent Rogers likely will miss season due to injury.	Art Briles will find a quarterback ... and most of the rest of the pieces are already in place.
WEST	2. Tulsa	A core of players has played in two consecutive bowls, including senior QB Paul Smith.	There are big holes to fill at offensive line, secondary and receiver.	Players and schedule (Houston and SMU at home, no Southern Miss) make Tulsa a title contender.
WEST	3. SMU	The Mustangs are more talented and deeper than they've been in a long time.	Lost defensive leaders; road games at Southern Miss, Tulsa and Houston in four-week period.	Schedule won't help, but time has come for SMU to have a winning record and earn a bowl.
WEST	4. UTEP	Spent the offseason trying to be tougher, more disciplined and better on special teams.	Miners start over in the passing game, are counting on a lot of young players.	After faltering with an experienced team last year, a young team should bring hunger and energy.
WEST	5. Rice	Solid group returns from program's first bowl since 1961; offense won't change much.	Todd Graham's abrupt departure was program's second coaching change in two years.	Won five C-USA games by 15 points last year; it will be difficult to pull that off in a second consecutive season.
WEST	6. Tulane	Needed a fresh start; new coaching staff is trying to instill much-needed toughness.	Both starting lines should be decent, but the lack of depth in both areas is a big concern.	Turnaround won't happen overnight; best Tulane can do is become tougher, more disciplined.

Lindy's 2007 ALL C-USA Team

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Paul Smith	Sr.	Tulsa
RB	Damion Fletcher	So.	Southern Miss
RB	Kevin Smith	Jr.	UCF
WR	Jarett Dillard	Jr.	Rice
WR	Emmanuel Sanders	So.	SMU
TE	Shawn Nelson	Jr.	Southern Miss
C	Doug Legursky	Sr.	Marshall
OL	Chris Clark	Sr.	Southern Miss
OL	Brandon Pearce	Jr.	Memphis
OL	Robby Heos	Sr.	Rice
OL	Jeff Akeroyd	Sr.	Houston
AP	Anthony Alridge	Sr.	Houston
PK	Jarod Tracy	Jr.	Tulsa

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Albert McClellan	Jr.	Marshall
DL	Marcus Hands	Jr.	East Carolina
DL	Robert Henderson	Sr.	Southern Miss
DL	Phillip Hunt	Jr.	Houston
LB	Reggie Carrington	Sr.	SMU
LB	Jeremy Jones	Sr.	UTEP
LB	Nelson Coleman	Sr.	Tulsa
DB	Quintin Demps	Sr.	UTEP
DB	Brandon Sumrall	Sr.	Southern Miss
DB	Joe Burnett	Jr.	UCF
DB	Bryan McCann	So.	SMU
P	Thomas Morstead	Jr.	SMU

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Justin Willis	So.	SMU
RB	Courtney Tennial	Sr.	Tulsa
RB	Matt Forte	Sr.	Tulane
WR	Duke Calhoun	So.	Memphis
WR	Donnie Avery	Sr.	Houston
TE	Cody Slate	So.	Marshall
C	Robby Felix	Jr.	UTEP
OL	Josh Coffman	Sr.	East Carolina
OL	Michael Parenton	Jr.	Tulane
OL	Andy Smith	Sr.	Memphis
OL	Walter Boyd	Sr.	Tulsa
AP	Emmanuel Spann	Jr.	Marshall
PK	Ben Bell	Jr.	Houston

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Cory Muse	Sr.	SMU
DL	Greg Terrell	So.	Memphis
DL	Martavius Prince	Sr.	Southern Miss
DL	Moton Hopkins	Jr.	Tulsa
LB	Chris Chamberlain	Sr.	Tulsa
LB	Brian Raines	Jr.	Rice
LB	Quentin Cotton	Jr.	ECU
DB	Braxton Amy	So.	UTEP
DB	Johnell Neal	Sr.	UCF
DB	Rocky Schwartz	Sr.	Houston
DB	Andrew Sendejo	So.	Rice
P	Britt Barefoot	Jr.	Southern Miss

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	East Carolina at Virginia Tech
Sept. 3	Texas Tech at SMU
Sept. 8	North Carolina at East Carolina
Sept. 8	West Virginia at Marshall
Sept. 8	Southern Miss at Tennessee
Sept. 15	BYU at Tulsa
Sept. 15	Texas at UCF
Sept. 22	SMU at TCU
Sept. 22	Oklahoma at Tulsa
Sept. 27	Southern Miss at Boise State
Oct. 13	SMU at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	Houston at UTEP
Oct. 27	SMU at Tulsa
Nov. 4	SMU at Houston
Nov. 10	Houston at Tulsa

Bowl Connection

Champion	Liberty vs. SEC
C-USA #2	GMAC vs. MAC
C-USA #3	Texas vs. Big 12
C-USA #4	Hawaii vs. WAC
C-USA #5	Papajohns.com vs. Big East
C-USA #6	New Orleans vs. Sun Belt champ

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Quintin Demps	FS	Sr.	UTEP	Growing into his potential as a first-round pick.
2. Jarett Dillard	WR	Jr.	Rice	Combines body control with fierce desire for ball.
3. Shawn Nelson	TE	Jr.	Southern Miss	Must bounce back from injury-plagued '06.
4. Joe Burnett	CB-PR	Jr.	UCF	Stats down in '06 because opponents avoided him.
5. Nelson Coleman	LB	Sr.	Tulsa	There's no avoiding Coleman at middle linebacker.
6. Doug Legursky	C	Sr.	Marshall	Strong, tough, veteran leader for young team.
7. Robby Felix	C	Jr.	UTEP	Centerpiece of improving offensive line.
8. Damion Fletcher	RB	So.	Southern Miss	Small, but still tough, quick and elusive.
9. Cody Slate	TE	So.	Marshall	Excellent hands, has ability to go up and get ball.
10. Emmanuel Sanders	WR	So.	SMU	Dangerous speed as receiver and returner.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Jarrett Dillard WR, Rice	Paul Smith QB, Tulsa	Albert McClellan DL, Marshall	James Casey DE, Houston

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Paul Smith, Tulsa
Strongest Arm	Justin Willis, SMU
Best Scrambler	Chase Clement, Rice
Coolest in the Clutch	Martin Hankins, Memphis
Toughest to Bring Down	Damion Fletcher, Southern Miss
Best Hands	Cody Slate, Marshall
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Emmanuel Sanders, SMU
Best Pass Blocker	Chris Clark, Southern Miss
Best Run Blocker	Doug Legursky, Marshall
Best Pass Rusher	Albert McClellan, Marshall
Best Cover Corner	Joe Burnett, UCF
Special Teams Demon	Damon Hurst, SMU

COUGARS

AT A GLANCE

2006

10-4 overall, 7-1 C-USA (1st, West)

COACH

Art Briles: At Houston and overall: 26-24, 4 years

RETURNING STARTERS

15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH

RB Anthony Alridge, WR Donnie Avery, WR Jeron Harvey, OL Jeff Akeroyd, TE Mark Hafner, CB Kenneth Fontenette, DE Phillip Hunt, SS Rocky Schwartz

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

Most skill position players are back for the defending league champs, including last year's leading rusher Anthony Alridge and a number of talented pass catchers. Veteran defense has some playmakers, and gets SS Rocky Schwartz back from injury.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

Last year's C-USA Offensive Player of the Year Kevin Kolb is gone, and that might be enough to derail the whole offense. Road games at Oregon and Alabama could hurt Houston's national credibility ... of course, there's a big opportunity there, too.

KEY LOSSES

QB Kevin Kolb, RB Jackie Battle, WR Donnie Avery, WR Vincent Marshall, OL Sterling Doty, LB Wade Koehl, DB Will Gulley, DL Marquay Love

OVERVIEW

Briles has no shortage of talent and, even though the quarterback situation isn't ideal, he has a proven offensive system. All the other very good pieces on offense, along with improvement on defense, make Houston the favorite to repeat as Conference USA champion.

Cougars Should Challenge for Title Again

Last year, the Cougars were the class of Conference USA, capturing their first league crown since 1996 and playing in their second straight bowl game.

Houston also racked up the hardware with quarterback Kevin Kolb earning C-USA Offensive Player of the Year honors, Art Briles being named the league's Coach of the Year, and four seniors garnering first-team all-conference honors.

All but Briles are gone, and with those losses come questions. The biggest is, who will start under center? A battle between Blake Joseph and redshirt freshman Case Keenum will settle that.

As the reigning league champs, UH won't sneak up on anyone in 2007. Briles upgraded his non-conference schedule with trips to Alabama and Oregon, plus a home date with Colorado State.

That means that once the meat of the league slate rolls around, the Cougars will be ready for whatever C-USA can dish out ... although the record might take a hit in the meantime.

OFFENSE

Four-year starter Kevin Kolb turned into a second-round pick of the Philadelphia Eagles, and his replacement in this high-powered offense will be ...

Check back later on that.

Blake Joseph, last year's backup who threw just eight passes in 2006, seems first in line, but redshirt freshman Case Keenum performed well during spring practice.

That led Briles to say there will be a full-fledged quarterback battle once two-a-days start in August. How quickly Joseph or Keenum make the transition will tell a lot about whether Houston is able to repeat as league champs.

There will no break-in time, as the Cougars open at Oregon, and a game at Alabama looms on Oct. 6.

For sure, Houston won't be empty-handed when it plays those big boys on the road.

Last year's top rusher Anthony Alridge, who ran for 959 yards and eight touchdowns on just 95 touches — yes, that's an amazing 10.1 yards per carry — is back for more. He really emerged during the second half of last season and now the 5-9, 170-pound senior should put a full year together.

He is backed up by redshirt freshmen Randall Antoine, who had an impressive spring game and has a bit more power, and Andre Kohn.

Houston is loaded at wide receiver, with Donnie Avery and Jeron Harvey considered the league's top receiver tandem. Avery caught 57 passes for 852 yards and five scores, while Harvey hauled in 41 passes for 671 yards and four touchdowns.

Sophomore Chris Gilbert steps in at slot receiver. Tight end Mark Hafner, who last year averaged an impressive 15.3 yards per catch, is another great option through the air.

As for the line, most of that unit returns intact. Left guard Jeff Akeroyd

PHOTO BY TODD SPOTH/NCAA SMI

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 168.3 ypg rushing (2nd C-USA/28th NCAA), 277.8 ypg passing (2nd/8th), 446.1 ypg total offense (1st/7th), 33.0 ppg (1st/10th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Blake Joseph	So.	Last year's backup battles Keenum for starting spot.	Case Keenum, Fr.
RB	Anthony Alridge*	Sr.	Nation's top returning rusher by average (10.1 ypc).	Randall Antoine, Fr.
WR	Jeron Harvey*	Sr.	Teams with Avery in C-USA's top receiving duo.	Tim Monroe, So.
WR	Chris Gilbert	So.	Sophomore should get the nod at slot position.	Perry McDaniel, Sr.
WR	Donnie Avery*	Sr.	One of league's fastest players back for senior year.	Brennan Gleason, Jr.
TE	Mark Hafner*	Jr.	Considered one of league's top returning tight ends.	Wesley Scourten, Fr.
LT	Matt Hart	So.	He and Vollmer will vie for starting nod.	Sebastian Vollmer, Jr.
LG	Jeff Akeroyd*	Sr.	Second-team All-C-USA lineman can also play guard.	Jerrod Butler, So.
C	Carl Barnett	So.	Member of 2006 C-USA All-Freshman Team.	Matt Parker, Fr.
RG	Michael Bloesch*	Jr.	Started final 10 games of 2006 at left guard.	Jared Lindsey, Fr.
RT	Dustin Dickinson*	Sr.	Has started 26 straight games, dating to 2005.	Jordan Shoemaker, Fr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 143.4 ypg rushing (5th C-USA/69th NCAA), 208.0 ypg passing (4th/70th), 351.4 ypg total defense (4th/72nd), 23.5 ppg (4th/64th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Phillip Hunt*	Jr.	Led team with eight sacks and 12 tackles for loss in '06.	Brian West, So.
NT	Cody Pree*	Jr.	Will compete with fellow junior Stewart for job.	Tate Stewart, Jr.
DT	Ell Ash	Jr.	Should provide great pressure from interior spot.	Billy Hartford, So.
OLB	Brendan Pahulu*	Sr.	Solid spring performance solidified his starting status.	Shomari Williams, So.
MLB	Cody Lubojasky*	Jr.	His 90 tackles last year were third-most on Cougars.	Rodney Rideau, Jr.
WLB	Trent Allen*	Sr.	Ranked second on team with 95 stops in 2006.	Rodney Rideau, Jr.
OLB	Stephen James	Jr.	Oklahoma State transfer impressed during spring drills.	James Francis, Jr.
CB	Quinte Williams	Jr.	Houston native played in all 14 games a season ago.	Carson Blackmon, So.
CB	Kenneth Fontenette*	Jr.	Started 11 games at three different positions a year ago.	Kellan Yancy, Sr.
SS	Rocky Schwartz	Sr.	Cougars could find way to get both on the field.	Ernest Miller, Jr.*
FS	Joseph Gonzales	Sr.	Figures to be healthy after offseason shoulder surgery.	Brandon Brinkley, So.

*Returning starter

is an all-conference candidate, while Michael Bloesch moves from left guard, where he started the final 10 games of 2006, to right guard. Also back is right tackle Dustin Dickinson, who has started 26 straight games.

Center Carl Barnett was a member of the 2006 C-USA All-Freshmen Team. Missing is talented left tackle SirVincent Rogers, who likely will sit out the season due to a knee injury.

DEFENSE

Briles says the defense might have to carry the offense early, given the uncertain quarterback situation. That would be a switch.

The front seven in Briles' 3-4 scheme could be a strength. Houston returns two of three starters on the line. End Phillip Hunt, who led the team with eight sacks and 12 tackles for loss, is one holdover.

Cody Pree should compete with Tate Stewart for the starting role at nose tackle. Ell Ash takes over at the other tackle spot and should provide good pressure.

Three-fourths of the linebacking corps returns. Trent Allen is the team's top returning tackler with 95, while Cory Lubojasky's 90 tackles ranked second. Stephen James, a transfer from Oklahoma State, was impressive during spring and likely secured a starting spot at outside linebacker.

A key member of the secondary could be strong safety Rocky Schwartz, who missed most of last season due to injury but was the team's leading tackler in 2005. Still limited this spring, he should be ready to go in the fall, perhaps as an outside linebacker.

Kenneth Fontenette, who started 11 games at three different positions a year ago, should settle in at cornerback.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ben Bell returns after hitting 14 of 18 field goal attempts. The Cougars will have a new punter with the top candidate being freshman Tommy Skinner, who kicked well during the spring.

Anthony Alridge and Donnie Avery are explosive returning kickoffs. Returning punts will be Teric Williams but freshmen Randall Antoine and speedster Anthony Reasno, a former track star, should also get a shot.

— Steve Hunt

UTEP MINERS

AT A GLANCE

2006

5-7 overall, 3-5 Conference USA (5th, West)

COACH

Mike Price — At UTEP: 21-15, 3 years; overall: 150-137, 25 years

RETURNING STARTERS

12; 8 offense, 4 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH

WR Jeff Moturi, FS Quintin Demps, LB Jeremy Jones, DT Ja-Boy Leomiti, RB Marcus Thomas, WR Fred Rouse

PRIMARY STRENGTHS

With Jeremy Jones back at linebacker and an improved defensive front, the Miners will be better against the run. New quarterback or not, Price's teams will always have a solid passing game, and there are weapons at receiver.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There are far too many new faces not to have questions, and so many projected starters missed spring drills with injuries that you had to be worried about the health of the team.

KEY LOSSES

QB Jordan Palmer, DL Alex Obomese, WR Johnnie Lee Higgins, LB Troy Collavo, PK Reagan Schneider,

OVERVIEW

There are a whole lot of new faces, but they're pretty much all Price's recruits now. The Miners will put up points again, but it won't be enough if they don't get better against the run. Modest improvement on defense won't be enough to contend for a C-USA title and a return to a bowl game.

Price Check: Can He Re-Start Program's Momentum?

El Paso is still in love with Mike Price, who rejuvenated the program when he arrived in 2004, but the honeymoon is over.

The immediate expectations Price created in his first two seasons — each culminating with bowl game appearances — created a fan base that likely will begin to jump ship if the Miners have a repeat of last year's 5-7 season.

And when Price says last year's team — headed by the school's all-time leading passer Jordan Palmer and all-time leading receiver Johnnie Lee Higgins Jr. — was better in spring than this year's team was, things might not appear to be headed in the right direction.

"Last spring, I thought we were a pretty good team," Price said.

"But as the season went along, we never got better. In fact, we might have regressed as the season went along. But this year, just in the spring, you can tell this is a team improving every day. We won't just stand still."

Asked if a Conference USA title and a return to a bowl game are realistic, despite the loss of Palmer, Higgins and 25 other seniors, Price was to the point. "Absolutely," he said.

OFFENSE

The departure of last year's senior stars might be a blessing in disguise. The Palmer-Higgins one-two punch led a passing attack that led Conference USA and was fifth in the nation with 312.8 yards a game.

But 84 percent of the offense coming through the air made it far too easy for the Miners to abandon the run game. The result was 57.6 rushing yards per game, which was last in Conference USA and 116th in the country.

Price vows to return to the balance with which he has found success throughout the years. Five returning starters on the line (despite three missing spring drills after various surgeries) and running backs Marcus Thomas (755 all-purpose yards) and Terrell Jackson (Oregon transfer) will allow that to happen.

The improvement in the run game will need to be drastic after a season in which nine players combined for just 691 yards on the ground.

"If you look at it, when we have a 1,000 yard rusher, we have a winning season every time," Price said. "It's that simple."

Five quarterbacks — none who have ever started a Division I-A game — battled in the spring. Freshman Trevor Vittatoe looks like he won the job, beating out Lorne Sam, whose value at wide receiver — he split time between the positions in 2006 — may hurt his shot at being the quarterback.

Along with Sam, the receiving corps will try to replace Higgins by committee.

Senior Joe West is the leading returning receiver (496 yards), but sophomore Jeff Moturi could be the home-run threat that replaces Higgins' ability to stretch the field. Florida State transfer Fred Rouse will factor in the mix, as will two experienced tight ends — Jake Sears and

PHOTO BY DONALD MIRALLE/GETTY IMAGES

Scouting Report: Offense

2006 stats: 57.6 ypg rushing (12th in CUSA/116th NCAA), 312.8 passing (1st/5th), 370.4 total offense (4th/39th), 27.3 ppg (3rd/38th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Trevor Vittatoe	Fr.	Had the best spring in five-way race.	Lorne Sam, Sr.
RB	Marcus Thomas*	Sr.	Had 755 all-purpose yards in '06, 39 receptions.	Terrell Jackson, Jr.
WR	Lorne Sam	Sr.	Value at wide receiver hurts his chance to start at quarterback.	Fred Rouse, So.
WR	Jeff Moturi	So.	Home run threat that has Higgins-like speed.	Brandon Jordan, Fr.
WR	Joe West*	Sr.	Leading returning receiver with 496 yards.	Kris Adams, Fr.
TE	Jake Sears*	Sr.	Both tight ends will play; combined 38 catches and 391 yards.	Jamar Hunt, Jr.
LT	Mike Aguayo*	So.	Earned starting job late in season.	Alex Solot, Fr.
LG	Cameron Raschke*	So.	May not be fully recovered from October ACL surgery.	Anthony McNac, So.
C	Robby Felix*	Jr.	Started all 24 games in his career at center.	Tanner Cullumber, Fr.
RG	James Riley*	Sr.	12-game starter last year; had ankle surgery in November.	Colby Meek, So.
RT	Tyler Ribitzki*	Jr.	"Big Rib" is recovering from November knee surgery.	Oniel Cousins, Sr.

*Returning starter

Scouting Report: Defense

2006 stats: 152.4 ypg rushing (10th in CUSA/87th NCAA), 242.5 passing (8th/106th), 394.9 total defense (8th/104th), 31.3 ppg (10th/107th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Dane O'Neill	So.	Stepping up after playing in five games in 2006.	Landon Goodwell, So.
DT	James Olalekan	Jr.	Played in every game in '06; battle for job not over.	Charles Ofili, Jr.
DT	Ja-Boy Leomiti	Jr.	Junior college transfer was most impressive DT in spring.	Chris Moore, So.
DE	Jason Boyce	Jr.	Junior college recruit outperformed two redshirts in spring.	Will Osolinsky, Fr.
LB	Jeremy Jones*	Sr.	Heart of defense back after broken leg in 2006.	Aaron Sims, So.
LB	Adam Vincent	Jr.	Arizona State transfer had 13 tackles in 2005.	Brian Wilkins, So.
LB	Emeri Spence*	Sr.	58 tackles, five for loss in 11 games last year.	T.J. Monroe, Sr.
CB	Josh Ferguson*	Sr.	Senior had 58 tackles and two interceptions last year.	Melvin Stephenson II, So.
CB	Cornelius Brown	So.	Will split time with McCullouch, who redshirted in '06.	Tim McCullouch, Sr.
SS	Braxton Amy	So.	Had five starts at linebacker in '06.	Da'Mon Cromartie-Smith, So.
FS	Quintin Demps*	Sr.	12 career interceptions; leading returning tackler (67).	Roddray Walker, Jr.

*Returning starter

Jamar Hunt, who combined to catch 38 passes for 391 yards and four touchdowns.

DEFENSE

Price said he takes the blame for last year's struggles because of how he handled the injury to Jeremy Jones, who broke his leg in practice two games into the season.

"After that, I sort of backed off from too much contact in practice, and we got soft," Price said. "That's the last thing you want in football, so the blame is on my shoulders."

Jones is healthy again and should return to being the same tackling machine he was in 2005, when his 130 stops helped make him a second-team all-conference performer. Arizona State transfer Adam Vincent will man the middle linebacker spot and look to replace Troy Collavo (125 tackles).

The line will feature four new faces, which is good considering last year's group allowed 152 yards rushing per game. Junior college transfers Ja-Boy Leomiti (tackle) and Jason Boyce (right end) should lead the charge.

Braxton Amy was a C-USA All-Freshman selection after averaging 8.2 tackles a game in his five starts at weak-side linebacker after Jones was hurt. He will return to his more natural position of strong safety.

All-conference free safety Quintin Demps and cornerback Josh Ferguson lend senior leadership and experience to a secondary that allowed more than 242 passing yards a game.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Price wants a rededication to special teams now that the Miners no longer have the luxury of kicker Reagan Schneider, punter Ryan Hotchkiss or even their long snapper.

Schneider, who hit 16 of 20 field goal attempts last season, including a long of 56 yards, will be the toughest void to fill. Jose Martinez will get the job in the fall, but how ready he will be is still a question after ACL surgery in February kept him out of spring drills.

Redshirt freshman Kyle Petersen will assume the punting duties.

— Geoff Grammer

A LOOK BACK

THURMAN THOMAS

OSU/COLLEGIATE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

5 YEARS AGO (2002)

Perhaps most notably, Nebraska was absent from the Big 12 race, slipping to fourth place in the North — the first time in 34 years that the Cornhuskers didn't win at least nine games. Colorado and Oklahoma captured the division titles, and OU blitzed 'em in the Big 12 Championship Game, as the Sooners had in the regular season.

- **Big 12 Champion:** Oklahoma (12-2, 6-2).
- **Big 12 Player of the Year:** Terence Newman, CB, Kansas State.
- **Heisman Trophy:** Carson Palmer, QB, Southern California.
- **National Champion:** Ohio State (14-0) shocked top-ranked Miami in the Fiesta Bowl, 31-24, in double overtime after getting a controversial pass interference penalty to go its way at the end of the first overtime.

10 YEARS AGO (1997)

In Year Two of the new conference, Nebraska was perfect, walloping South champion Texas A&M in the Big 12 title game, 52-15. The Huskers were so convincing in a 42-17 Orange Bowl rout of third-ranked Tennessee, voters in the coaches poll moved them from No. 2 past Michigan to share the national title. It was the third in four years for Tom Osborne, who then retired (and the Huskers have never been the same).

- **Big 12 Champion:** Nebraska (13-0, 8-0).
- **Big 12 Player of the Year:** Ricky Williams, RB, Texas.
- **Heisman Trophy:** Charles Woodson, DB-WR-RS, Michigan; Williams was fourth and would win it the following season.
- **National champion:** Nebraska (13-0, coaches poll) beat Tennessee in the Orange, 42-17; Michigan (12-0, AP poll) beat Washington State in the Rose Bowl, 21-16.

15 YEARS AGO (1992)

Texas A&M went undefeated, but sat at No. 4 while Alabama and Miami played for the national title. The Aggies lost to No. 5 Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl, 28-3. For the second year in a row, the Big Eight did not have a team finish in the Top 10, after Nebraska was drilled by Florida State in the Orange Bowl.

- **Big Eight Champion:** Nebraska (9-3, 6-1).
- **Big Eight Player of the Year:** Derek Brown, RB, Nebraska; Deon Figures, CB, Colorado.
- **SWC Champion:** Texas A&M (12-1, 7-0).
- **SWC Player of the Year:** Lloyd Hill, WR, Texas Tech.
- **Heisman Trophy:** Gino Torretta, QB, Miami.
- **National champion:** Alabama won its seventh official national title by thrashing the heavily favored Hurricanes, 34-13, hammering their Heisman Trophy winner and snapping their 29-game winning streak.

20 YEARS AGO (1987)

The Big Eight race was decided when No. 2 Oklahoma scored 17 unanswered points in the second half to upend No. 1 Nebraska, 17-7, in Lincoln. The Sooners, though, were knocked off by Miami (in Miami, of course). The Southwest Conference also came down to its big game — with Texas A&M capturing the league title by beating Texas, 20-13. The Aggies then beat Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl, 35-10.

- **Big Eight Champion:** Oklahoma (11-1, 7-0).
- **Big Eight Player of the Year:** Thurman Thomas, RB, Oklahoma State.
- **SWC Champion:** Texas A&M (10-2, 6-1).
- **SWC Player of the Year:** Tony Jeffery, RB, TCU.
- **Heisman Trophy:** Tim Brown, WR-RS, Notre Dame, who was manhandled by the Aggies in the Cotton Bowl.
- **National champion:** No. 2 Miami (12-0) beat No. 1 Oklahoma in the winner-take-all Orange Bowl, 20-14.

25 YEARS AGO (1982)

Nebraska's only blemish during a 12-1 season was a 27-24 loss at eventual national champ Penn State. The Huskers wrapped up a perfect conference season with a 28-24 victory over Oklahoma, then beat LSU 21-20 in the Orange Bowl to finish No. 3. Eric Dickerson-led SMU went unbeaten, but it wasn't easy. The Ponies won their first three SWC games by a total of 12 points, and later was tied by Arkansas. They never lost, though, and eked out a 7-3 Cotton Bowl win over Pittsburgh to wind up No. 2 in the polls.

- **Big Eight Champion:** Nebraska (12-1, 7-0).
- **Big Eight Player of the Year:** Mike Rozier, RB, Nebraska; Rick Bryan, DT, Oklahoma.
- **SWC Champion:** SMU (11-0-1, 8-0-1).
- **SWC Player of the Year:** Eric Dickerson, RB, SMU.
- **Heisman Trophy:** Herschel Walker, RB, Georgia; Dickerson was third.
- **National champion:** No. 2 Penn State upended top-ranked Georgia, 27-23, in the Sugar Bowl.

30 YEARS AGO (1977)

With quarterback Thomas Lott running the wishbone behind another outstanding OU line, Oklahoma coasted in the Big Eight, finishing two games ahead of the field. Texas won the SWC on the strength of a 13-9 victory over Arkansas. Still, after the top-ranked and unbeaten Longhorns, led by Heisman winner Earl Campbell, lost to Notre Dame in the Cotton Bowl, the Razorbacks leapfrogged the Longhorns to No. 3 in the final polls.

- **Big Eight Champion:** Oklahoma (10-2, 7-0).
- **Big Eight Player of the Year:** Terry Miller, RB, Oklahoma State.
- **SWC Champion:** Texas (11-1, 8-0).
- **SWC Player of the Year:** Earl Campbell, RB, Texas.
- **Heisman Trophy:** Earl Campbell, RB, Texas.
- **National champion:** In a wild finish to the season, No. 5 Notre Dame (11-1) beat No. 1 Texas in the Cotton Bowl, and No. 2 Oklahoma and No. 4 Michigan also lost ... and the Irish got the votes over No. 3 Alabama, which had beaten Ohio State in the Sugar.

Pictured: UA Metal™ Speed Series Cleat, HeatGear® Full T, Sleeveless I Microstripe, UA Socks, Strength Short, UA Skull Wrap, UA Receiver Gloves. ©2007 UNDER ARMOUR® Performance.

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